University of Alberta

Healing and Cultural Formation in a Bush Cree Community

by

Craig T. Candler

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

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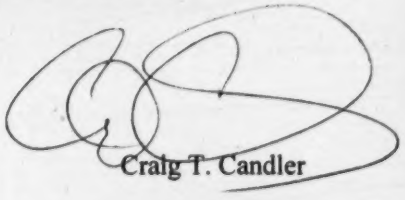

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on fieldwork conducted with the Cree and Métis community of Wabasca-Desmarais, Alberta in 1996 and 1997. By comparing three case studies involving Cree traditionalism, northern industry, and Pentecostalism, traditional knowledge is explored as a critical resource for the formation of healthy and effective worldviews within rapidly changing circumstances. This process of cultural formation involves developing models of the world that are both aesthetically meaningful and pragmatically rewarding within individual lived contexts. If northern development is to be truly sustainable, we must recognise that industrial activities have an impact not only upon material resources critical to traditional health and healing (e.g. plants and animals), but also upon the institutions in which traditional knowledge is encoded and transmitted. The thesis concludes with a set of recommendations as to how such impacts might be recognised, reduced, or mitigated in the future.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Thesis

Too often theory is left ungrounded by the experiences of life. Ideas, concepts, dreams become dry and hollow shells, meaningless and empty, when they are not rooted in the lived rhythms of our everyday worlds. Our families, our bodies, our memories, our desires: these are the kinds of existential rocks upon which we test our theories and our dreams. We search for stories, songs, beliefs, hypotheses and models that are both practical and beautiful, simultaneously blending pragmatic function and aesthetic meaning. Where they ring hollow we will likely abandon them. Where they ring true we use them to expand our understanding of the worlds within which we live (Candler and Spack 1998, Young 1982).

This process of testing ideas and dreams upon the rocks of lived experience is both the beginning and the ending of this thesis. During fieldwork with the community of Wabasca-Desmarais in northern Alberta it has served as both my methodology, and my eventual solution. That one concept has served as both a methodology and solution is not as strange as it might seem. After all, why should the anthropological process of seeking to understand an unfamiliar community and culture be any different from the human processes whereby we seek to understand the changing circumstances around us? Our epistemologies of knowledge are not so different. We weave our worlds and ourselves, our disciplines and our societies from the knowledge that we gain.

Problem Statement

How has northern industrial change affected community health and traditional healing in northern aboriginal communities? In particular, how has it affected the resources necessary for traditional healing and community health to occur? Wabasca-Desmarais is a largely Cree community rooted within the boreal forests of northern Alberta. Since the late 1950's the people of Wabasca-Desmarais, like many other northerners, have witnessed the rise of massive resource extraction industries within the territories that have traditionally sustained their community. In the 1950's and 60's the expansion of Alberta's oil and gas industry into the northern forests began. In the late 1980's the petroleum companies were joined by multinational forestry corporations in a massive government supported initiative to develop the northern forests for the production of pulp and paper.

These recent industrial developments have made major contributions to the massive economic, cultural, social, and political changes that have swept through Wabasca-Desmarais and many other northern Canadian aboriginal communities over the past century. To attempt to understand the whole range of effects that these industries have had upon northern communities would be a mammoth undertaking. Instead, I chose to approach the issue of northern change through exploring how industrial development has affected one aspect of one community: traditional health and healing in Wabasca-Desmarais. However, in the course of research, even this more modest approach has required me to ultimately focus on much broader issues of community health, colonial pressure, cultural knowledge and revitalisation. These mix with currents of northern change and personal history to influence culture, health, and community in the boreal

forest. Within such a context, as Warry (1998) has pointed out, health must be understood to include the ability of community and cultural systems, be they political, ideological or economic, to respond adequately to change while also providing a sense of systemic coherence and stability for their members.

Underlying this primary issue of how northern industrial change is affecting traditional healing and community health is the deeper theoretical issue of how individuals and communities respond to processes of globalisation and colonisation within local lived contexts. Over the past two decades this issue, variously referred to as cultural globalisation, hybridisation, syncretism, creolisation or blending, has come to the forefront of anthropological debate and concern. As stated by Hannerz (1991), these debates have tended to regard globalisation as either a process of cultural homogenisation or as a process of increasing cultural diversification and complexity (Kaplan 1995, Sahlins 1994, Clifford 1992). They have also tended to occur at high levels of theoretical abstraction, remote from the lived realities of local individuals and communities. Understanding how industrial change has affected the health and culture of Wabasca-Desmarais provides a case study of how individuals and communities localise forces of globalisation in general.

Project Overview

This thesis is based largely on fieldwork conducted with the Cree and Métis communities of Wabasca-Desmarais and the Bigstone Cree First Nation. The research took place over a two-year period from the summer of 1996 through the spring of 1998 and was part of a larger project entitled *"Improving the Health of Northern*

Communities". It was supported by grants from the Canadian Circumpolar Institute (CCI) and from the Network of Centres of Excellence in Sustainable Forestry Management (NCE-SFM) and was conducted under the auspices of the Centre for the Cross-Cultural Study of Health and Healing (CCSHH) at the University of Alberta. The research involved both qualitative (e.g. in-depth interviews) and quantitative (e.g. questionnaire interviews) research strategies developed and carried out with the help of several local community co-researchers. The ultimate direction of the project has been shaped largely by feedback received throughout the research process from elders, community members, and co-researchers from the Wabasca-Desmarais area.

Wabasca-Desmarais is an extremely complex community that is largely divided into Pentecostal and Traditionalist factions. During my fieldwork this cultural complexity highlighted the intensely individual, historical and holistic contexts of everyday existence within which politics, social life and the effects of northern development are all experienced and made local. It is these historical, holistic, and individual contexts of localisation that have become the main subject of this study. Through paying attention to a constellation of these individual views, represented through texts from in-depth interviews, I began to discern a complex, but understandable, web of diachronic relationships within the community.

The chaotic complexity, evident at first in the social and political life of the community, settled somewhat whenever I sat down for tea and an interview with individuals from the community. Sitting down for tea, or during a ceremony or a sermon, I was listening to remembered events, life stories, goals, dreams, and opinions. I was also listening to people tell me through narrative how they tried to make sense of their

individual lives and of the social, spiritual, economic, and ideological worlds they found themselves in. Within the life stories of Wabasca-Desmarais, within the lived experiences of individuals and the self-conscious evaluation and interpretation of those experiences, I found clues to the microscopic patterns that made the macroscopic complexity of Wabasca-Desmarais more intelligible. Interestingly, there also seem to be similarities across life stories and their associated micro-patterns despite the split between Pentecostals and Traditionalists. Increasing industrial development, the legacy of Catholic and Anglican residential schools, the rise of Pentecostal Christianity, and attempts to maintain and revitalise Cree culture, traditional knowledge, and indigenous medicine in the community are all subject to and defined by individual, holistic, and historic interpretations. These interpretations, in turn, are formed within frameworks that combine the aesthetics of meaning and the pragmatics of function into cultural wholes. The local manifestations of cultural complexity are given form, meaning, and substance through the lives, histories, and ambitions of community members as they seek to understand and respond to northern change and industrial development.

Research Objectives and Thesis Structure

Throughout this project I have tried to maintain an applied perspective with the end goal of producing something that is useful to the community of Wabasca-Desmarais, but also has broader relevance for more general applied and theoretical problems in anthropology. Through the process of this research I have used the much espoused and debated ideal of sustainable development as a reference point. I am of the opinion that in order for development to be truly sustainable it must support the overall health of the

systems it influences. Industrial development must be measured in terms of how it affects the health of local individuals, communities and cultures, as well as in terms of how it affects the health of larger ecologies and economies. My hope is that this research can facilitate a better understanding of the contemporary situation of Wabasca-Desmarais and of how the rise of boreal forest industries affects local cultures, communities, and especially systems of indigenous medicine and traditional health care. This improved understanding may, in turn, lead to improved evaluation, assessment, and mitigation of industrial projects in the North with the end goal of supporting rather than eroding the resources necessary for healthy northern communities and cultures.

In order to achieve this lofty goal it is essential that this thesis be written in such a way that it communicates effectively with those who read it. If my writing cannot effectively communicate my arguments to others then my arguments are neutered and rendered mute and useless academic exercises. This is not what I intend and so I have tried to make this thesis as readable and my arguments as understandable as possible. I have chosen to use the first person pronoun 'I' wherever appropriate in order to improve readability. This also provides a more dialogic and conversational style, and undermines the false sense of authority and objectivity that is often implied by avoiding personal pronouns. While I have tried to avoid using the professional jargon of anthropology, I have found it necessary to use specialised terms in some places in order to articulate myself. Also, later in this chapter, I provide accounts of my methodologies so that the foundations of my data and later arguments may be clear to the reader.

My second chapter consists of an introduction to the Wabasca-Desmarais and to the time that I spent there. Before formal research could begin I needed to develop

relationships within the community and through them come to a general understanding of the region and its dynamics. This was and is an ongoing process of learning, and after two years of work I can still only claim a basic understanding of the major trends and currents of the community's people, cultures, and histories. Chapter two represents this process and provides a sketch of both the community and the contexts of the research. This includes a broad ecological, demographic, historical and ethnographic profile of the people and places that make up Wabasca-Desmarais as well as a reflexive sketch of my experiences in the community, told largely through narrative. This reflexive account is intended to give the reader a better idea of the experiential realities of the research including how I, as an ethnographer and outsider, was situated within the community, and how this has structured my understandings and my research.

Chapters three, four and five represent the primary data upon which my analysis is based. As discussed in chapter two, it became evident early in the project that the resources necessary for traditional health and healing include not only plants and animals (natural resources), but also, and perhaps more importantly, people (human resources), knowledge (intellectual resources), and resources of the spirit (spiritual resources). From this perspective it became clear that issues of traditional healing and community health in Wabasca-Desmarais are tightly interwoven with issues of cultural identity and community revitalisation. These, in turn, are influenced largely by a constellation of three institutions: northern industry, Cree tradition, and the Pentecostal church.

Chapters three, four, and five provide detailed sketches of industry, Traditionalism, and Pentecostalism respectively. Each of these chapters is organised around a body of textual interviews excerpted from transcribed interviews or texts

authored by a single key individual from within each of these three institutions. Each text is preceded by a context that provides a detailed introduction to the subject institution and contains general information regarding the text to help the reader understand and interpret it. Following each text I have used the process of hermeneutic[1] exposition (Young et al. 1996) to elaborate on major themes and issues from the text, drawing in additional information derived from other research interviews and field experiences where appropriate. The hermeneutic expositions are intended to provide explorations of the individual texts in order to facilitate analysis and comparison between them.

Chapter three focuses on northern industry in Wabasca-Desmarais and particularly the multinational owned pulp and paper company Alberta-Pacific Industries Ltd. (Al-Pac). The text used in chapter three is from an interview with Elmer Ghostkeeper, a Métis from northern Alberta and the leader of Al-Pac's Aboriginal Affairs Resource Team (AART). Chapter four focuses on Cree traditionalism and specifically traditional health care in Wabasca-Desmarais. This chapter is organised around a text provided by Denys Auger, a leading traditionalist and elder from community who is also involved with the Bigstone Community School. Chapter five profiles the Pentecostal movement in Wabasca-Desmarais and is organised around a text from Paul Hunter[2], a Cree elder who was one of the founders of Pentecostalism in Wabasca-Desmarais. The individuals who are the focus of these chapters are not intended to definitively represent the institutions they are a part of. Instead, their texts are provided as case studies used to root the understandings of the research within the lived experiences of community

[1] Hermeneutics essentially refers to the interpretative process of making something from one context understandable in another.
[2] This is a pseudonym as Mr. Hunter preferred that his name not be used in writing.

members.

In chapter six I provide a comparison of the three texts, and the recent histories of industry, Traditionalism and Pentecostalism in the community. Through this comparison and analysis I trace the relationships between the institutions, personal histories and attitudes toward traditional healing, cultural revitalisation and community health in Wabasca-Desmarais. In particular I explore how individuals within the community have formed their cognitive models[3] of the world, of traditional healing and community health, why particular philosophies such as Pentecostalism might be popular in the North, and what the role of industrial development has been in all of this. Based on these understandings I argue that individuals in Wabasca-Desmarais (and by implication, elsewhere) form their worldviews from a combination of individual experience and transmitted knowledge, and that these cognitive models of the world are individually constructed according to criteria pertaining to both aesthetic meaning and pragmatic function. I then propose a theoretical meta-model for understanding how individual cognitive models are formed and expanded over time using both traditional and innovative knowledge. In this meta-model, traditional knowledge and culture are recognised as critical resources for the formation of individual cognitive models and effective cultural screens. These have a direct impact on the health of individuals, communities, and cultures.

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[3] These are analogous to the concept of a mazeway which, "is to the individual what culture is to the group. Just as every group's history is unique, so every human individual's course of experience is unique. As a product of this experience, every human brain contains, at a give point of time, a unique mental image of a complex system of dynamically interrelated objects. This mental image - the mazeway - includes the body in which the brain is housed, various other surrounding things, and sometimes even the brain itself.... used by its holder as a true and more or less complete representation of the operating characteristics of a 'real' world." (Wallace 1970)

In chapter seven I apply this model to assess the impact of northern industry on resources of traditional knowledge and culture in Wabasca-Desmarais. I argue that impacts upon these intangible cultural resources erode traditional healing and community health directly and that these impacts must be acknowledged in determining the sustainability of northern industry and its effect on the health of local individuals, communities and cultures. Finally, I provide a set of recommendations intended to serve as guidelines for evaluating, assessing, and mitigating the effects of industrial development on traditional healing, knowledge and community in Wabasca-Desmarais. It is hoped that these recommendations will have wider applications in other communities and contribute to the potential of industrial development to support rather than erode the health of local communities and cultures. I conclude the chapter with a summary of my thesis, the data used to support it, and the resulting insights into the applied issues of sustainable development and the broader theoretical issues of how individuals localise global trends within lived contexts.

Field Methods

Through the course of the project a number of research methods were employed including qualitative and quantitative strategies such as participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and statistical analysis of questionnaire data. At the best of times the quarry of anthropological research is an elusive animal, and the complexity of Wabasca-Desmarais made it more so. Through using a number of different research strategies a broad range of resources were tapped to produce a variety of data sets. Each set of data, be it interview text, statistical graph, or field experience, has its

own unique qualities and provides valuable insight into issues of northern change and community health. Each kind of data also has its own limitations and so shedding light from a variety of perspectives provides a better overall understanding of the subject. Using several research strategies simultaneously it is possible to triangulate (Smith 1981) or cross-reference the various data types to achieve a more accurate and detailed picture of the community and its dynamics. For example, interview texts can be informed by statistical data or relevant literature, which in turn can be informed by field experiences derived from participant observation.

Through the course of the project I tried to strike a balance between data-driven and community-driven research. Purely data-driven research can quickly become unresponsive to community needs, while community-driven research can easily become overly partisan and lose credibility. My basic research strategy has been based on an applied participatory action research (PAR) philosophy (see Ryan 1995, Park 1993, Ryan and Robinson 1990). As noted by Warry (1998), such research "must be community based and controlled, must respond to local needs, and must be put to use to improve people's lives." However, due to the complexity of Wabasca-Desmarais, the actual research has deviated from PAR philosophy in a number of ways.

In PAR, the community is involved in, and in control of all aspects of the research including the development of basic research questions, objectives and methodologies, carrying out and evaluating research, analysing results, and disseminating or utilising those results. As noted by Ryan and Robinson (1996) PAR can be difficult at the best of times. However, as discussed later in this chapter, the division of the community and its governing institutions into Pentecostal and Traditionalist factions made it extremely

difficult to know which 'community' should have control of the research. As a result, informal discussions rather than formal meetings were used to direct the various aspects of the project. While unofficial support for the research seemed to be widespread, no officially sanctioned community organisation could be found to take on the direction of research on a topic as controversial as traditional healing turned out to be. While community members were consulted and involved in every aspect of the research, the official locus of control has remained in the hands of university researchers, including myself. How the research results will be utilised by the community remains to be seen.

Given these circumstances the initial research questions, objectives and methods with which I approached the community were based on those developed by Dr. David Young and myself at the University of Alberta. My initial research took place over a period of several weeks and consisted of participant observation and unstructured exploratory interviews with a number of community members, elders, band administrators, and Al-Pac employees. These interviews were intended to propose the research to key community figures and develop feedback regarding the appropriateness of the research within the community. The responses from these individuals tended to be positive, and their comments and suggestions were used to revise our research goals and strategies.

Like later in-depth interviews, these first exploratory ones were carried out using the hermeneutic method outlined by Michrina and Richards (1996). In this method information or data is understood to be both created and negotiated during the course of the interview with the direct involvement of both anthropologist and research participant. In this type of interview, both interviewer and participant are understood to be active.

This is in contrast to more conventional ideas of the interview, which often have the interviewer actively asking questions with the participant passively responding to them. The hermeneutic interview is a productive and interactive discussion as new data are formed through dialogue between anthropologist and community member, informing the research in a way that allows a collaborative perspective to evolve. The perspective represented by the interview text is therefore dialogic: it is created in the context of discussion. It is the result of a research encounter in which knowledge is restated or reconfigured to suit the issues raised during the interview. As such, the text is uniquely suited to conveying and expressing data in novel or unconventional ways. Furthermore, by recognising research subjects as active within the process of research and data formation, this methodology recognises the discourse of friendship and empowerment that ideally occurs between research participants in the field. The interview process was important for producing data and refining basic research methods and questions, but it was also essential in building relationships with people in the community. In all cases interviews were conducted in English and took place in settings that were familiar to the participants: either within their homes, or their offices. Interviews were recorded using notes and a hand held tape recorder where appropriate.

I utilised the time honoured anthropological method of participant observation through participation in everyday community life and through observing interactions in small group settings. This research strategy consists of immersion in the slow, cumulative and often subconscious learning that takes place while listening to, observing, and participating in lived contexts. Within them the anthropologist becomes a social actor, and through trial and error and lived experience I was able to learn how to live in a Cree

community, how to navigate the politics of social relationships, how to interact within friendships and participate in networks of reciprocity. These often subtle opportunities for insight took place anywhere and everywhere: while pumping gas at the community store, while drinking tea or watching TV with friends, while participating in traditional sweat lodges, or during Pentecostal tent meetings.

After several weeks of exploratory interviews and participant observation some of the major community dynamics began to become apparent. Foremost amongst these was the split between Pentecostalism and Traditionalism. This split of ideologies was central to political allegiances, social divisions and identity, often dividing families and playing a major role in the perception of traditional knowledge, medicine and community health in the community. Based on the insights negotiated through the initial stages of research I assembled a structured questionnaire (see appendix 1) in order to provide broad-based quantitative data to complement the qualitative research. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses on four categories of questions. These included basic personal data (age, gender, religious affiliation, etc.), attitudes towards health, community, and industry, beliefs regarding tradition, and religion, and practices including the frequency of use of traditional medicine, and of biomedicine. This questionnaire was tested with and evaluated by Marion Cardinal and Jeanne Cardinal, co-researchers hired from the community.

The questionnaire was revised and then delivered by several community researchers, all female and from the community, to a 10% representative sample of Wabasca-Desmarais. The sample size was determined using census data from the 1991 and 1996 Canadian census (Statistics Canada 1991, 1996). The questionnaire was

intended to be both exploratory and evaluative and so no attempt was made to structure initial responses into pre-determined categories. Open-ended questions were asked instead. Community researchers were trained in interview techniques and interviewed community members in their homes, asking questions in a conversational style. Responses were noted directly on the questionnaire. Each questionnaire session took approximately one hour to complete, and efforts were made to make it as informal and natural an experience as possible. Responses were voluntary, and interviews could be stopped at any time if the interviewee did not wish to continue. Approximately 130 questionnaires were completed over a period of one year. The fields amenable to quantitative analysis were entered into an SPSS program (see appendix 1). Demographic statistics present in this thesis are derived from either this analysis or from Statistics Canada data. Fields that were characterised by more qualitative responses were analysed in conjunction with the other qualitative data provided by transcribed interviews.

Concurrent with the questionnaire interviews, I conducted follow-up interviews with a number of community elders, religious leaders, industry representatives, and educators. These interviews were semi-structured in that they generally adhered to a set of broad topics and issues. These included attitudes toward traditional knowledge and practice, and the incorporation of these into the community's contemporary health and education systems, perceptions of industry in the community, and ideas about what can be done to reduce, reverse, or compensate for any negative impacts of industry. Eventually I narrowed the interviews to focus on three segments of the community: industry, Pentecostalism, and Traditionalism. My intention was to develop an in-depth understanding of these three critical institutions and their interactions. Interviews within

both Pentecostalism and Traditionalism seemed to naturally revolve around two key individuals. However, interviews with industry representatives did not have a strong focus on any one individual. All interviews, including those from previous stages of the research, were transcribed and analysed for key issues and common themes. This process produced nearly 500 pages of interview text with elders, religious leaders, administrators, educators, health care professionals, and Al-Pac executives and managers.

Ultimately, I focussed on the narratives and life histories represented in the interviews and found that understanding them and their backgrounds was critical to understanding why certain philosophies have become popular within the community over the past thirty years. I assembled three texts from the interviews using a process similar to the methodology of hermeneutic exposition outlined in Young *et al.* (1996). Each text is based on interviews with a single individual and represents key ideas and concepts expressed by that individual in his own words, and in a relatively concise form. Where possible, the texts were further fleshed out using supplementary materials authored by the speakers. In this way, I arrived at the three texts that are presented in this thesis. These texts are then explored and elaborated on through hermeneutic exposition in order to highlight critical themes and facilitate later comparison and analysis.

Analytic Methods

The dilemma of anthropology springs from the challenge of understanding the world from one context (emic or local meaning), and then communicating that knowledge into another quite different context (etic or global meaning) where the knowledge becomes more generally accessible to people of diverse backgrounds.

Learning and understanding culture is only half our battle. Our second and perhaps more herculean challenge is to bring home what we have learnt and make it understandable within the context of the different tradition. In doing so we also have a responsibility to remain true, as much as possible, to the original source and meaning of what has been given us to understand. Rearticulating cultural knowledge into a suitable form hinges upon our ability to comprehend and express the symbolic landscapes that serve as the context for that knowledge. In negotiating these landscapes we not only have to perceive and relate to the meanings that are hidden there, but we must also find our way home with them (Riddington 1990).

Hermeneutic exposition is an interpretive process detailed in Young et al. (1996). It was developed as a methodology for allowing emic or culture-bound views to be "reframed in more general terms without doing violence to the original concept" (Young et al. 1996:115). This is attempted through developing a liberal interpretation of the source material presented as an exposition and intended to render the material's meanings more visible to the reader. This exposition often requires a simplification of the source material and a restatement of it in the author's terms. However, reframing emic views in a way that does justice to the original source also requires an appreciation of the complex personal, institutional, and historical contexts in which those views occur. In order to help accomplish this the exposition is preceded by a source text that reflects more clearly the original richness and tone of the material. In the exposition new information can be introduced and interpretive techniques such as metaphors can be incorporated so long as the basic emic meanings of the text are not altered beyond recognition. The

reconfiguration of the text through exposition highlights key themes and elaborates important issues. At the same time, it facilitates the comparison of one text to another.

Whereas Young et al. use hermeneutic exposition for interpreting a single specific concept, I have used it to interpret a broader range of ideas and attitudes as expressed by three Cree speakers. My first analytic and interpretive step was the formation of the texts. The texts presented in this thesis were developed through selecting those portions of transcript that seemed to express most succinctly the speaker's attitudes towards subjects such as traditional knowledge, healing, and industrial development. After the texts were formed, they were edited slightly in order to make them more readable and understandable. This included adding implied or contextual comments within square brackets, and omitting extraneous material as indicated by the use of dots.

My second analytic step was to read through the texts and identify key issues and ideas occurring in them. These key concepts, what Young et al. refer to as metaconcepts, were written separately in the margins of the text. Although these metaconcepts are not included in this thesis, they served as the skeletons for my third analytic step: the exposition. In the expositions I wove additional information from my work in Wabasca-Desmarais around the key concepts I had identified in order to clarify the links between key concepts and clarify important statements made in the speaker's narratives.

The three expositions became the basis for comparative analysis of the case studies, my fourth analytic step. Through situating my comparisons at the level of the exposition I was able to take advantage of this more abstract, generalised, and simplified level of analysis. This allowed me to avoid the difficulties of comparing long transcripts of diverse qualitative data. The expositions provide relatively focussed accounts of the

speakers' perspectives and allow for comparisons between them that are easier to understand and to evaluate. The insights derived from these comparisons were then explored and situated within the broader ethno-historical contexts of northern change in Wabasca-Desmarais.

The final level of analysis involved the synthesis of a new set of understandings regarding the role of traditional knowledge in the formation of healthy cultures and communities, and the impacts that industrial development and other globalised phenomena can have on this. While still based on my research with Wabasca-Desmarais, this synthesis is intended to have theoretical applications for northern Alberta and beyond. In my concluding chapter I re-evaluated my data and experiences from Wabasca-Desmarais in light of this theoretical synthesis and the project's other findings in order to arrive at a set of practical recommendations for improving the sustainability of future industrial development in Wabasca-Desmarais and other northern Aboriginal communities.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction to Wabasca-Desmarais

How to Get There from Here

Travelling north from Edmonton along the Trans-Canada highway you move through a subtle change of worlds. The corporate castles of the city centre, encircled with their bustling sprawl of suburban neighbourhoods, overpasses, strip malls, and parking lots, give way to occasional small towns and solitary gas stations set amidst fields of wheat and barley that have been made to grow in Alberta's agricultural heartland. The fields and small towns go on for hours but eventually the crops recede from the asphalt stretch of highway. The farmhouses give way to groves of mixed aspen and spruce, and then, on all sides, the boreal forest begins to surround you.

The ribbon of asphalt continues northeast from the small farming town of Slave Lake as a secondary highway. The road runs along the eastern shore of Lesser Slave Lake itself and continues on through stretches of trembling aspen, willow, and birch, occasionally dipping into wet muskegs of spruce or rising into sand hills of tall pine. The pavement is new and the road is kept in good condition. For an hour and a half there is nothing but trees, forest, and the occasional muddy industry access road snaking off from the main highway. Eventually, almost five hours north of Edmonton, a sign at the side of the road indicates that this is the territory of the Bigstone Cree First Nation. The speed limit decreases, small houses, fences, and a new junkyard for abandoned vehicles indicate the beginnings of a northern community. For a few minutes there are small government issue houses on both sides of the highway, most with pick-up trucks nearby, and then the forest opens up to reveal two large lakes: North Wabasca Lake on the left, South

Wabasca Lake on the right. The pavement runs through an open low lying area between the lakes, usually flooded and full of ducks in the spring, but good horse pasture in late summer. On the far side is a bridge, and then a stop sign and an intersection, and then the northern Cree communities of Wabasca and Desmarais stretch north and south along the far shore of the two lakes.

Arriving properly in Wabasca and Desmarais requires a shift of mind as well as a trip northwards. Viewed from the etic perspective of a university trained academic the community is, in many ways, a marginalised periphery of the political and commercial centre provided by Edmonton and other cities to the south. As in many northern communities, the people of Wabasca-Desmarais have, on average, lower incomes, higher rates of illness and addiction, lower levels of education, and higher levels of unemployment than most Canadians. The community is subject to the vagaries of a global resource economy of staggering proportions, and has little power to affect anything but the most local of its manifestations.

Despite these largely imposed conditions of colonialism and globalisation, it is a mistake to approach Wabasca-Desmarais only as a periphery. From an emic or local perspective, Wabasca-Desmarais is also a centre. It is a centre for northern worlds, around which local lives, histories, and traditions are formed, lived and taught. It is a homeland and refuge made sacred by the lives and stories of one's grandmothers and grandfathers, and it is the focus of a Cree debate regarding the future that is generations old. Wabasca-Desmarais may be caught up in powerful global currents, but some of the people who call the place home are able to view those currents from their own unshakeable centres and turn them creatively to their own ends and understandings.

Arriving in Wabasca-Desmarais properly requires a respect for these perspectives and an openness to participate in them, accepting that possibly, at least momentarily, the world may revolve around a different centre.

Community Background

Wabasca and Desmarais are twin communities that have grown up beside North and South Wabasca Lakes over the past century. The two communities have grown together and now consist of a single stretch of homes, stores, gas stations, and offices that runs for nearly10km along the lake shores. Approximately 95% of the permanent population is Cree or Cree-Métis, with Cree and English being the most common languages spoken. Wabasca, the off-reserve community, is concentrated along the north lake, and Desmarais, the centre of the Bigstone Cree First Nation (IR 166A), is located along the south. Wabasca and Desmarais share many of the same services and are interrelated through strong family and social ties. Three other nearby Bigstone Cree reserves, including Sandy Lake, fifteen minutes to the south, all share the same services and similar social and kinship ties. For all intents and purposes these all form a single dispersed community, divided in many respects, but as a whole referred to as Wabasca-Desmarais.

Geography and Demographics

Wabasca-Desmarais is situated approximately 130 km northeast of the town of Slave Lake, and 200 km north of Athabasca (see figure 1). The community falls within the Low Boreal Mixedwood Ecoregion (Strong 1992) and is dominated by the mixed

Figure 1: Map of Northern Alberta (adapted from Goddard 1991)

[Figure 1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The map removed can be found in John Goddard, *Last Stand of the Lubicon Cree*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991: vii.]

aspen forests that surround it and give its economy, culture and people life. These forests are made up of a diverse canopy of aspen, poplar, spruce, birch and pine with an understory of willow (*Salix spp.*), saskatoon (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), prickly rose (*Rosa acicularis*), and a rich variety of smaller herbs and other plants. This diverse flora is the local manifestation of the largest forest in the world; a green blanket that covers nearly a third of Canada and accounts for nearly 80 percent of our country's forests (Pratt and Urquhart 1993).

For generations the boreal forest has been an essential resource of plant foods, medicines, ceremonial materials and building supplies for the Bigstone Cree, as well as an essential habitat for local animals. The region is frozen solid during the long, cold winters, and during the short, warm summers the air is alive with mosquitoes and other biting insects. Large fauna including moose (*Cervus canadensis*), deer (*Odocoileus spp.*), and bear (*Ursus spp.*) are common throughout this massive area and continue to provide important sustenance for the local community. Smaller animals such as rabbit (*Lepus americanus*) and porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), and commercial fur bearers such as beaver (*Castor canadensis*), and muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) are also common.

The two lakes on which Wabasca-Desmarais is situated are the largest bodies of water in the area. There are, however, many other small, shallow lakes nearby, all footprints left by the retreat of glaciers 12,000 years ago. North and South Wabasca Lakes contain a rich supply of fish, particularly whitefish, and support a large number of vacationing sports fishermen as well as an ongoing aboriginal fishery. The lakes provide the main source of water for the community, and are a destination for migratory and nesting waterfowl including duck (*Anas spp.*) and geese (*Branta spp.*). The Wabasca

River, one of the largest in northern Alberta, drains from the northern tip of the North Lake and runs for several hundred kilometres to join the Peace River to the north. By any account, the boreal forest is a rich and vast resource, a legacy of thousands of years of growing, burning, and regenerating. For the forest industry, it is a resource to be mined, sustainably if possible, for the commercial profit it can yield. For Cree traditionalists it is a home and a spiritual wellspring, a foundation for traditions and lives, to be lived in, learned from, and respected.

According to the community's municipal authority, Municipal District no. 17, Wabasca-Desmarais' population numbers approximately 3000 people. However, the precise number is difficult to assess due to the large numbers of migrant workers who move in and out of the area on the fortunes of international markets for oil, gas, pulp and paper. In the winter of 1997, when the price of oil was high, several community members estimated that the population of the area had almost tripled (personal communication 1997). Like many other northern aboriginal communities the vast majority of the population consists of young people. In Wabasca-Desmarais nearly 75%[1] of the population is under 35. Wabasca-Desmarais is the largest aboriginal community in the Treaty 8 area, with the Bigstone Cree First Nation being the largest band. Despite this, the area currently held by the Bigstone Cree covers a relatively small amount of land[2] (129,121 hectares) scattered between five reserves in the Wabasca-Desmarais area (see figure 2). Beyond Wabasca-Desmarais and the Bigstone Cree reserves, the vast majority of the surrounding land is crown owned and subject to intensive commercial logging by

[1] According to the numbers available to the M.D., this percentage is even higher, with 80% of the community under the age of 30.
[2] A specific land claim for the Bigstone Cree is pending.

Figure 2: Map of the Wabasca-Desmarais Area

[Figure 2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The map removed can be found in Alberta Economic Development, *Alberta Community Profiles: Wabasca-Desmarais.* Edmonton: Alberta Economic Development, 1996.]

multinational corporations, such as Al-Pac, who have negotiated Forestry Management Agreements (FMA's) with the provincial government.

Ethno-Historical Background

There is much debate in the scholarly literature regarding the origins of Cree peoples in what is now northern Alberta. This debate essentially revolves around whether the Cree are quite recent immigrants to the area, the result of an 18th or 19th century expansion from the east (Mandelbaum 1979, Bryan 1969, Jenness 1955), or whether Cree presence in the area is of greater antiquity (Russell 1991, Smith 1981). Bryan (1969) surveys the literature and focuses the issue specifically on ethno-historic interviews conducted in Wabasca-Desmarais. He indicates that the Cree of north-central Alberta most likely arrived in a late proto-historic expansion between 1700 and 1750 where Cree from more easterly areas, having better access to firearms and the fur trade[3], forced the Beaver Indians (*Dane Tsaa*) northwest and the Blackfoot (*Kainai*) south. Russell (1991) and, to a lesser extent Smith (1981), argue other evidence to suggest that while there was an influx of Cree into the area through the 18th and 19th centuries, a Cree community of some antiquity was already established in the area at that time.

To some extent, the debate over Cree origins is a moot point for the community of Wabasca-Desmarais. What cannot be debated is that the early history of the area was a dynamic one. In the contact and proto-contact periods the area was swept by early epidemics of flu and smallpox. Contact with fur trade networks became important and

[3] Based on information from Noel Boskoyous, an elderly man from Desmarais, Bryan states that the remaining Beaver Indians in the area were assimilated into the Cree community and that "[t]he Beavers at Wabasca are now identified by that surname…" (Bryan 1969:33) but have otherwise become Cree.

brought new tools and ideas to the North. The turmoil associated with westward expansion of Euro-American colonisation influenced northern cultural, political, spiritual and economic realities. There is full recognition that the community is made up of families that have come to the area from many other places. Some have come from Calling Lake to the south, some from Peerless and Chipewyan Lakes to the north; some came to Wabasca Lakes from the plains after the Red River Rebellion of 1885. Regardless of their origins, the people of Wabasca-Desmarais have been on the land for generations and their stories, memories, and dreams are tied to the local geography with an intense sense of place. The land and the forest, in an archetypal sense, breathe life into Cree traditions and histories and provide them with the legitimacy of time immemorial.

Smith (1981) notes in the *Handbook of North American Indians* that very little ethnographic work has been conducted with the Western Woods Cree in general, and north-westernmost Cree groups in particular. With only a few exceptions (Ghostkeeper 1996, Auger 1995, Young et al. 1990, Zieba 1990) this situation has not improved much since the time of Smith's writing. The majority of Cree ethnographies come from the northern plains area (Dusenberry 1962, Ahenakew 1973, Braroe 1975, Mandelbaum 1979, Lightning 1994) or from the eastern Cree of Ontario, Quebec, and the Hudson and James Bay regions (Mason 1967, Feit 1991, Berkes 1987, Tanner1979). The people of Wabasca-Desmarais generally consider themselves *sakaw nehiyaw* or Bush Cree, and are generally referred to as Western Woods Cree, or Strongwood Cree (Smith 1981) in the academic literature. Cree is an Algonquian language and the northern variant of the 'y' Cree dialect is commonly heard in Wabasca-Desmarais and increasingly taught in local schools.

Consistent with other aboriginal groups in the boreal forest, the traditions of the *sakaw nehiyaw* are based in a history as hunters, gatherers, and trappers. Small family based bands lived close to the rhythms of the land, moving according to annual and seasonal cycles in the availability of a diverse range of subsistence resources including moose, bear, rabbit and fish, as well as berries and plant foods. Within the often difficult cycles of life in the boreal forest a tradition of generalised reciprocity was essential. As with other boreal forest groups, knowledge was considered to be the most critical human resource (see Riddington 1988, 1990). The traditional Cree environment is alive with the social and spiritual presence of humans, animals, plants, and elemental or ecological phenomena such as the wind, fire, or rock, often referred to as *manitowak*[4], or with kinship terms such as grandmother or grandfather. In this world, human actors are understood to be among the least powerful. Human success and health is entirely dependent on one's ability to maintain good relationships with one's ancestors, and with *manitowak* to ensure the support and co-operation needed to survive. Knowledge of how to maintain and develop these relationships is encoded and enacted through a rich tradition of ceremonial and ritual interaction, including the making of tobacco and food offerings, demonstrations of respect and the observance of taboos. This basic concept of relationship maintenance continues to be essential to traditional Cree approaches to life, industrial development, health, and healing.

Throughout recorded history, north-central Alberta has remained one of the most remote areas of the province. It does not have the rich agricultural potential of the Peace River region, and so was not subject to the early influx of homesteading settlement that

[4] This is the plural of *manito*, often translated into English as spirit, but probably better understood as 'power' with its connotations of energy, strength, and the capacity for movement and life.

occurred in northwestern Alberta. It is also outside the drainage of the Athabasca River, and so was off the main north-south highway of the Mackenzie River district for the duration of the fur trade era. Despite this, the Cree of Wabasca-Desmarais participated in the fur trade through posts established at Athabasca and at the east end of Lesser Slave Lake in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In the 1890's the Hudson Bay Company established a small fur post at Wabasca Lakes, an important seasonal campsite, to better access the high quality furs coming from the area. In 1899 representatives of local First Nations and the Government of Canada negotiated Treaty 8 on the shores of Lesser Slave Lake. The Cree of Wabasca-Desmarais later signed Treaty 8 as an adhesion on August 14, 1899 (Fumoleau 1973). One of the primary reasons for the signing of this treaty, on Canada's part, was to clear the way for peaceful economic expansion and development in the northern forests (Price 1980, Dickason 1992).

The signing of Treaty 8 marked the official beginnings of a relationship that has resulted in a century of extremely rapid change for Wabasca-Desmarais. A semi-permanent community grew up around the HBC post at Wabasca Lakes and in 1896 a small Catholic mission, St. Martins, was established there. An Anglican mission, St. Charles, followed shortly after. Both Catholic and Anglican missions established residential schools and, as elsewhere, Aboriginal children were forced by Canadian law to attend the church run educational institutions. Over time many of the families from the surrounding hunting and trapping territories settled at Wabasca Lakes in order to be closer to their children and to the largely sedentary community that was developing there. Wabasca and Desmarais grew up largely around the Catholic and Anglican missions respectively, and the competition between the denominations was fierce. One elder who

attended the Anglican residential school stated that as children they were taught by the school's nuns and priests not to speak with any of the children at the Catholic school, even if they were close relatives (personal communication 1996).

Wabasca-Desmarais remained isolated through most of this century. A trip to the nearest town of Slave Lake, 120 km southwest, took a week and a half, and was made with a horse team along wagon trails. It was not until the government realised that the region had value in terms of oil and gas that roads into the area were improved. In the 1950's and 1960's the wagon trail was upgraded into a muddy gravel road to provide access to the area for oil companies and northern development. The improved roads also provided increased access to wage employment, alcohol, and a wide range of consumer goods and foreign ideas. Through this period the Catholic and Anglican churches began to take a much more tolerant stance towards each other and towards Cree languages, traditions, and values, eventually incorporating them into church service and pastoral teachings. In the early sixties, the first Pentecostal preachers visited the area, and although they did not stay, their presence had a profound effect on many community members. Also in the 1960's, the Catholic and Anglican residential schools began to shut down in favour of secular state-run schools.

Since the 1960's the community's economy has shifted from a traditional one valuing reciprocity and based largely on hunting, fishing, plant gathering and fur trapping to a cash economy based largely on wage labour for multinational resource companies extracting the area's resources. The oil and gas industry continues to be important, as are federal transfer payments including family allowance and social assistance introduced in the 1960's. As in many northern communities, the rapid economic and political changes

of the past century have been accompanied by massive social and cultural changes. While the community's access to acculturative institutions such as the Canadian health care system increased, the prominence of traditional Cree institutions, including systems of Cree health and healing, decreased as they fell into disuse.

In the late 1980's and early 90's the Alberta government launched an economic diversification plan aimed at expanding the provincial economy through commodifying the northern forests. This plan brought Al-Pac, owned largely by Mitsubishi Corporation, one of the largest transnationals in the world, to Wabasca-Desmarais, and resulted in Al-Pac building one of the largest bleached kraft pulp mills in the world on the Athabasca River approximately 180 km southwest of the community.

Father Vandersteene's *Wabasca*

The earliest and most detailed written accounts of life in Wabasca-Desmarais come from the work of a Catholic missionary to the area by the name of Father Vandersteene who wrote *Wabasca: dix ans de vie indienne* (1960). Vandersteene was assigned to St. Martins in Wabasca in 1947 and spent several years in the community before continuing his missionary work in more northern communities. Vandersteene spoke excellent Cree and became a vocal advocate for Cree tradition within the Church and the residential school system (Waugh 1996). He profoundly influenced the relationship between Cree traditionalism and the Catholic and Anglican churches, contributing to the thorough syncretism of Catholicism, Anglicanism and Traditionalism that occurs in Wabasca-Desmarais today. Many of the traditionalist in the community also consider themselves Anglican or Catholic and do not feel that there is any conflict

between their various beliefs and rituals. Traditional Cree ceremonies are often explained using stories and symbols from the Bible, and the current priest in charge of St. Charles Roman Catholic Church in Desmarais commonly finds traditional tobacco offerings in the pews of the church after mass (personal communication 1996).

Only a few portions of Vandersteene's *Wabasca* have been published in English (Waugh 1996, Habgood 1969). Habgood abbreviates Vandersteene as saying that in the early 1950's,

> ...The mission consisted of a tiny church, a small school, a small house built for the priests, another house for the two nun, a few fields, a stable, a chicken shed...a dock for canoes, and a storage place for dried fish. Besides the Catholic mission, Wabasca contains also a Protestant [Anglican] mission and a Hudson's Bay Company store. The Cree live in the forest, in log huts in winter, and in tents in summer...(Habgood [trans.] 1969: 39)

Vandersteene then goes on to provide accounts of a number of Cree oral traditions regarding the origins of the world, the culture hero *Wasakichak*, the cannibal *Witigo*, and the Cree conception of *Kichi Manito*, God, or the Great Spirit. Vandersteene also provides a lengthy account of his participation in a traditional *Wikokewin* ceremony, often referred to as an invitational dance, ghost dance, or, in the sparse literature regarding it, the ceremony of the dead (Waugh 1996: 50-55). From Vandersteene's accounts it is clear that local Cree tradition had already adopted a number of Christian influences by the middle of this century. This process of blending has continued to occur, and although the *wikokewin* fell into a period of disuse in the 1960's and 1970's, it was revived in Wabasca-Desmarais in the 1980's. During my time in the community I took part in two *wikokewin*

ceremonials, and although there have been a number of significant changes it is still recognisable from Father Vandersteene's accounts.

A Current Picture

Today the economics of pulp and paper, oil and gas, and the politics of the Bigstone Cree First Nation dominate the community of Wabasca-Desmarais. A community profile distributed by the Municipal District (M.D. of Opportunity #17) and Alberta Economic Development states that,

> ...the socio-economic conditions...are improving due to better opportunities in the last few years. The unemployment rate approaches 75% at certain times of the year. The local area suffers from the problems associated with lack of industry, education and proper training. (Alberta Economic Development 1996 :1)

From the highway, the community seems to be a strange mix of underdevelopment and overdevelopment. After crossing the lake one can see the newly expanded Riverside restaurant, and its associated hotel, service station, bar, and liquor outlet built to service the resource industries. The paved roads are filled with potholes as a result of traffic from large logging trucks and industry vehicles. Across from the Riverside is a muddy parking lot and the local Northern grocery store. Turning right you head south past a new hospital, a few more service stations, the high school, and the fenced compound where non-Native staff live before passing St. Martins, the old Catholic church and residential school buildings. A sign and the end of the pavement mark the beginning of the Bigstone Cree First Nation reserve. The houses on reserve tend to be small and in relatively poor repair, many of them mobile trailers. East, away from the lake shore, several new buildings are under construction including a new band office for

Chief and Council, and a spectacular new band school modelled after a huge white tepee.

While the community has experienced a massive influx of industrial development in recent years, non-local policies and goals still control it. Massively powerful global corporations dominate industry in the area, capitalising on the resources, communities and economies of the north in order to maximise corporate profits. As in all colonial situations, northern development has tended to benefit the corporate developers and cities to the south more than it has the communities and areas in which the developments have been situated. While Wabasca-Desmarais receives some benefits in terms of employment and business opportunity, most of these are short-term, seasonal, or unstable. Primary resources such as lumber, natural gas, or crude oil are extracted from the community's ancestral territory for the benefit of southern populations. Foreign or southern companies make the lion's share of the profits from northern development, while northern communities and ecosystems suffer the long term environmental and social impacts (Adams 1975, Berger 1977, Axtell 1985). As in many northern communities this rapid economic change, accompanied by environmental damage and massive social and cultural change, has resulted in erosion of the local institutions which transmit and reinforce traditional knowledge and culture.

James Waldram et al. (1995) states that in the late 19th century through to the middle of the 20th, traditional aboriginal institutions and knowledge were under attack from the Church run residential school system and from repressive federal legislation designed to assimilate Aboriginal people. He goes on to say that:

> ...for the most part these measures were not aimed at [Aboriginal] medical practices *per se* but rather elements of Aboriginal spiritual and social life which were deemed by these agents to be barriers to assimilation. However...Aboriginal medical systems were intertwined with other

> aspects of religion and culture, and hence an attack on the latter constituted an attack on the former. (Waldram et al. 1995: 117)

This statement is as true for Wabasca-Desmarais as elsewhere, and it applies to the present situation of the community as well as to its past. Current opposition to traditional spiritual, cultural and medical systems no longer comes directly from the colonial forces of the federal government or the Anglican and Catholic Churches. Instead, the most obvious active opposition to Traditionalism comes from the Cree Pentecostal churches that have grown up within the community.

Approximately 12% of people in Wabasca-Desmarais identify themselves as Pentecostal. Slightly less that that identify themselves as Traditionalist. Occupying the middle ground between these two minorities are those who identify themselves as either Anglican or Catholic, but even these often lean towards either the syncretism of Traditionalism or the charismatics of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism continues to appeal to many Cree. Despite the relatively small number of people who self-identify as Pentecostals, they are an extremely vocal minority that has become both economically and politically powerful over the past thirty years. Pentecostals regularly hold at least three of the seven seats on Chief and Council as well as many of the top administrative positions. This seems to indicate that far more than 12% of the community support the Pentecostal movement[5], and that many of those who self-identify as either Catholic or Anglican actually lean towards the Pentecostal side. All of the leaders of the Pentecostal church in Wabasca-Desmarais are Cree, male, and mostly from one dominant family.

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[5] This indication is reinforced by estimates made by community members suggesting that 30-50% of the community currently follows Pentecostalism. Both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals felt that this percentage is currently declining.

Within this Pentecostal-Cree context traditional medicine, tied up as it is with traditional religion and spirituality, is publicly characterised as primitive, satanic, sinful, and antithetical to salvation. The practices and knowledge associated with traditional medicine become understood as evil, corrupting influences. As a result of Pentecostalism's power and popularity traditional knowledge and traditional medicine have become extremely contentious political issues, as have any projects proposing to support or revitalise Cree traditions in the community.

Project Background

Project Origins and Transformations

When I first arrived in Wabasca-Desmarais, academic interests and academic funding drove my research, and, with the best of intentions, I headed in the wrong direction. My interests were in traditional Cree healing and the resources important to it. Wabasca-Desmarais seemed to be an ideal place to conduct research on the effects of industrial forestry practices on traditional health and healing resources, especially the medicinal plants and herbs of the boreal forest understory. Traditional medicinal is still fairly common in the community and the ancestral territories of the Bigstone Cree are almost entirely situated within the forest management area of Al-pac and so are subject to intensive logging.

Despite this, I quickly learnt that my initial approach to the community and to the research was not suitable. While in the community I drove a bright yellow 1973 Volkswagen beetle with ample rust, but a good engine. My vehicle certainly stood out next to the 4x4 pick-up trucks that otherwise populated the dusty gravel roads, much to

the pleasure of the children who would run out of their houses, laughing and pointing, when I passed. The summer of 1996 was very wet, and any time it rained all of the roads off the main highway would turn into thick mud. At one point my vehicle became hopelessly stuck in the slick gumbo and the sight of my bright yellow bug stranded in a sea of northern mud was so comical and frustrating that I took a picture. That picture has become a metaphor for the early stages of my research and the events that finally sent me in a better direction.

Soon after arriving in the community I began to recognise the cultural complexity of Wabasca-Desmarais. I had not been expecting the huge diversity of opinions regarding tradition and traditional knowledge, nor the contentiousness with which they were greeted in a community split between Traditionalism and Pentecostalism. It took me nearly two months to schedule a meeting with the Bigstone Cree Health board: it was obvious that they were reluctant to meet with me. In my meeting with them I introduced the project and raised the possibility of a joint collaboration involving traditional health and healing, not knowing that the head of the board was a devout Pentecostal. I did my best to present the project in a sensitive manner that would be applied to the community's concerns, assuming that the board would be interested in a project that validated and sought to support the community's Cree culture. The proposal received such a hostile reaction from the board that I came close to abandoning my research immediately after our meeting.

My VW bug was an academically driven project in northern Alberta, stuck in Wabasca-Desmarais' mire of factionalism and cultural complexity: a substance of extraordinary stickiness and fecundity. I suspect that anthropologists often encounter

such difficult mud in the field, however it is often exorcised from our final reports and analysis. The reason that I was stuck was, of course, because I hadn't yet learned how to drive well on the community's roads. As a result of getting stuck, I realised that my approach to the research was heavy-handed and full of the materialist biases that western academia tends to use in understanding community and traditional health. With the help and persistence of Denys Auger, the elder I had been visiting, we were able to dig the car, and the project, out of its rut. I was able to get back onto the still muddy roads of Wabasca-Desmarais, and cautiously headed in a new direction.

The factionalism between traditionalists and Pentecostals proved to be the single largest obstacle for traditional healers and healing in the community, and also the single greatest problem of my research. As identified by most of the traditional healers interviewed, the most powerful medicine and the most important resource for healing is knowledge: knowledge of one's self, and one's relationship to the world as informed by tradition and experience. It was evident that my initial focus on challenges to material resources for healing, such as herbs and plant medicines, was inappropriate, or at least incomplete. From the traditionalist perspective, the resources needed for community and individual healing are not only material. They are also intangible, and inherently spiritual: they include the knowledge and understanding that comes from the practice of tradition and they include traditional religious, medical, ethical, and ecological knowledge[6].

Once it was pointed out to me, it was obvious that without knowledge of how to use it, a plant cannot be a resource, no matter how useful its formal qualities might be. If

[6] I agree with Elmer Ghostkeeper (1996) that a more appropriate word would be wisdom, as the product of both experience and knowledge. However, for the sake of consistency, I chose to use the term knowledge.

the knowledge of how to use a plant is lost, then that plant is lost as a resource *ipso facto*. The resource of traditional knowledge serves a similar role for the spiritual resources that are available to us. Knowledge is the key to interacting properly with the *manito* of powerful plants, animals, and the world in order to ensure the gifts of spiritual guidance and assistance needed for health and happiness to be maintained or increased. Traditional knowledge is a necessary resource for establishing and developing the symbolic and spiritual relationships that are so essential to traditional Cree medicine. Finally, traditional knowledge is also a critical resource for empowering the people who are searching for healing, or for the ability to heal. Knowledge of ceremonial protocols, human, spiritual, and ecological relationships, traditional Cree psychology, philosophy, and ethics, or sacred songs and formulas allows people to form strong and resilient identities and allows informed interaction in the kinds of relationships that can bring about healing.

In summary, the initial challenges of fieldwork in Wabasca-Desmarais illustrated that there are four general kinds of resources that are necessary for traditional health and healing. These include medicinal plants and animals (natural resources), but also, and perhaps more importantly, include traditional knowledge (intellectual resources), people (human resources), and resources of the spirit (spiritual resources). Of these it is the resource of traditional knowledge that seems to be under the greatest pressure, and is, perhaps, the most important. Industrial secularisation and Pentecostal animosities have combined with the legacy of the residential schools and Canada's historic policies of assimilation to erode the Cree institutions that transmit traditional knowledge, and have thereby impacted a critical resource for traditional healing and community health.

Unrolling the Hide: A Reflexive Narrative

The dynamics of race and gender were a constant factor throughout the fieldwork. As a university educated Euro-Canadian urban male, I was easy to identify in a small northern aboriginal community. The most common first reaction to my presence was suspicion, likely based on the history of Euro-Canadian colonialism in the north. Despite this within a week of my arrival in Wabasca-Desmarais Deny Auger, a prominent Traditionalist and elder in the community, invited me to live in his 'camp', a group of three isolated cabins located across the lake from the main town site. My friendship with Denys gave me a place in the community and allowed me a unique opportunity to understand contemporary traditions of Cree medicine through direct experience and participation in daily life and frequent ritual activity. Much of my knowledge regarding Cree medical traditions comes from this process of learning through listening, observing, and participating in life at Denys' camp. My understandings of the larger community are often set within the context of frequent trips made to Wabasca-Desmarais, fifteen minutes away, to buy groceries, get water, or visit someone for an interview.

One of the consequences of such active participation in social relationships is the acquisition of responsibilities and social obligations of reciprocal giving that often characterise Cree relationships between both human and non-human levels. As a result, part of my learning process, or research, has involved building a network of allies, both human and spiritual, that have contributed knowledge and authenticity to my work and which I have counted on in times of crisis. In many ways Denys Auger became my teacher and I became his student. This relationship required me to become involved in the

political and social environment of traditional knowledge in the community. My status as a university researcher was often linked to being "Old Denys' friend", providing me a warm reception under some circumstances and a cool one under others. This relationship gave me a position within the community that people were familiar with and could relate to. It also played a critical role in my ability to build a social network within the community through which I could carry out my research.

When I first arrived in Wabasca-Desmarais, Denys invited me to stay in a spare cabin of his. Previously I had been living in a tent in a provincial campsite on the shores of North Wabasca Lake. I accepted his offer, and after four[7] days at Denys' cabins he asked me to help chop wood and get some rocks for a sweat lodge ceremony that he invited me to participate in. After the sweat lodge both of us were lying on the mossy ground, exhausted from the heat, and swatting at hungry northern mosquitoes. He told me that before I had ever come to the community he had dreamt of me, "I looked out the door of my cabin and I saw you sitting there, on the ground. You had the hide of an old cow, cow moose in front of you. It was scraped clean and had been left rolled up for a long time, like it had been forgotten in a corner somewhere…You were sitting there and trying to unroll that hide on the ground, but it wouldn't lie flat. You were having a hard time because that hide was so old, had been rolled up for so long. Every time you'd get one corner to lay down and move on to the next one, it would role up again on you. You were getting frustrated, and you wanted to quit. You wanted to walk away from it." Denys paused for a bit. " But when I saw that I also remembered what an old woman once told me. She said that a hide like that, a thick hide if it's trimmed right can make a

[7] In Cree tradition the number four is of sacred importance, as it is for many other First Nation groups. Denys' invitation for me to participate after four days marked the event with a particular significance.

really good bag, or pack for carrying things. Strong[8]." Denys said that he knew from his dream that I was going to go through some hard times in the community but that if I persevered and stuck with my work I would be able to do something that was useful. He also saw that I would need his help and support.

Denys' dream of me sitting at his cabins trying to unroll an old moose hide proved to be both prophetic and critical for the direction of my research. It was prophetic in that it foreshadowed the frustrations I would experience in obtaining political support from a largely Pentecostal chief and council for a project addressing traditional health and healing. As well, a myriad of other smaller challenges and frustrations seemed to continually crop up over the course of the fieldwork. The vision helped determine the direction of my research because it structured, to a large degree, my relationship with Denys. It automatically placed my presence and my work within a spiritual framework rather than a purely secular or academic one. It was evident through his dream that I was not just a stranger. I also had relationships, or at least the potential for having relationships, within a traditional Cree context. I had a reason to be there that gave me *ocitaw*[9], or a purpose that was meaningful in terms of Denys' perspective.

This vision placed Denys and me in an elder-student relationship where I had the responsibility of learning and participating in knowledge that may have remained closed to me otherwise. At its most frustrating moments, I was very close to abandoning the project. However, Denys' dream meant that my choice to continue involved more than just the logistics of research. In deciding whether or not to continue with the project I was

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[8] I reconstructed Denys' account of this dream from fieldnotes. Although it is not a precise transcript, I believe it maintains the spirit of the event.

[9] Waugh (1996) provides a discussion of this Cree concept (pp. 56-57) and defines it as "purpose", but according to my understanding of the term it also implies "purpose in relation to others".

also deciding whether or not to believe the reality of Denys' vision. If I quit, then I demonstrated my disrespect for and disbelief of traditional Cree perceptions of sacred reality. In order to participate in the Cree world I found myself in I had to acknowledge the reality of dreams and dreaming and the power that they could convey. I had to recognise and respect the relationship that I had with Denys, and the relationships I was building elsewhere through ceremonial activity. I had to accept that valid learning and knowledge could be achieved and communicated through spiritual realities that I had very little knowledge of. Ultimately (and perhaps unscientifically) I decided to allow emic spiritual realities a hand in influencing me and directing my research. I decided to accept, for a moment at least, that the world revolved around a traditional Cree centre.

CHAPTER THREE

An Industry Case Study

> Alberta-Pacific is a forestry company in the business of timber harvesting and manufacturing pulp for the global marketplace…Aboriginal people have lived in the Forest Management Area (FMA) for hundreds of years prior to Alberta Pacific coming into existence. Alberta-Pacific honours this reality and…commits to Aboriginal participation in all aspects of the Company. (Al-Pac Aboriginal Affairs Management Guide 1996: 1-2)

Context: Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc.

Although it is nominally a Canadian company, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., or Al-Pac as it is more generally known, is owned by a consortium of transnational Japanese business interests. The Mitsubishi Corporation, one of the largest and most powerful companies in the world, holds the controlling share (Pratt and Urquhart 1993). Mitsubishi's gross annual income is greater than the GDP of most nation-states, and its globalised power crosses all borders, interacting with local economies and cultures in its search for corporate profit. Al-Pac is one of its Canadian incarnations but Mitsubishi is active in jurisdictions throughout the world. Through Al-Pac and other resource extraction companies, the future of Wabasca-Desmarais is tied directly to the global market for pulp and paper and to the corporate cultures of global capitalism.

In 1990, after two years of public hearings and opposition from environmentalists and local First Nations, including the Bigstone Cree, Al-Pac received permission from the Alberta government to build one of the largest pulp mills in the world on the banks of the Athabasca River, 180 km southwest of Wabasca-Desmarais. In 1991, Al-Pac signed its forestry management agreement (FMA) with the Alberta government. This FMA gives

Al-Pac management rights over 6.1 million hectares[1] of crown land in the boreal forests of northern Alberta. In the summer of 1993, the Al-Pac mill commenced operations. Although the FMA does not include Wabasca Lakes or the actual community of Wabasca-Desmarais, it does surround them on three sides (see figure 3), and includes most of the traditional territory of the Bigstone Cree Nation.

Al-Pac uses state-of-the-art technology to cut, transport, and process timber from the boreal forest into the bleached pulp used to manufacture paper and paper products. The forests the mill depends on include softwood species such as spruce and pine, but aspen hardwood is the most critical resource. The trees are generally clear-cut in the winter using heavy machinery to harvest a portion of the FMA each year. In the process of clear-cutting most of the herbs and smaller species of the under canopy are destroyed, and local ecosystems are disturbed. Softwood species may be replanted but aspen clear-cuts are usually left to regenerate naturally. Concurrent with Al-Pac's harvesting, many other uses of the boreal forest including hunting and trapping, and petroleum industry exploration and development are expected to occur.

Al-Pac is unusual amongst large forestry companies for its active involvement with aboriginal communities. This active involvement is likely due to a combination of at least three factors. First, there is a desire to address the vocal opposition Al-Pac received from First Nations during initial public hearings into the construction of the mill. Second, to avoid costly conflicts like the one generated by Daishowa-Marubeni International, Al-Pac's neighbour and competitor to the west, through its combative relationship with the Lubicon Lake First Nation northwest of Wabasca-Desmarais (Goddard 1991). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a small number of Al-Pac's managers seem to genuinely

[1]Fifty times as large as the entire land base of the Bigstone Cree First Nation.

Figure 3: Map of FMA's in Northern Alberta (Pratt and Urquhart 1993)

[Figure 3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The map removed can be found in Larry Pratt and Ian Urquhart, *The Last Great Forest: Japanese Multinationals and Alberta's Northern Forests.* Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1993: 10.]

recognise the validity of aboriginal rights and aboriginal knowledge in the north. One of these individuals is Elmer Ghostkeeper, a Cree Métis anthropologist and entrepreneur from the community of Paddle Prairie in northwestern Alberta. It is difficult to estimate how widespread support for Aboriginal Affairs is within Al-Pac's organisation. However, Elmer's vision of *mamawi mamitoneyichikunan sechigewin* or 'together thinking partnership' (a model for developing the relationship between industry and northern communities) is at the core of Al-Pac's Aboriginal Affairs Resource Team (AART) and their innovative initiatives. These have included commitments in the areas of community relations, trap line management, aboriginal education, employment, training, and traditional knowledge (Al-Pac 1996; see appendix 2).

Elmer was born in 1947 and raised in a remote northern Métis community, eventually moving south to Edmonton and earning a diploma in Civil Engineering Technology. He worked as an engineer for several years before returning to his home community to farm and work in the oil and gas industry where he "experienced first hand the impact of non-renewable resource development on a sustainable livelihood" (Ghostkeeper 1996:2). Elmer became a successful businessperson, but eventually returned to Edmonton and the University of Alberta to complete a Master's degree in Anthropology. His thesis, *Spirit Gifting: the Concept of Spiritual Exchange*, is largely an attempt to reconcile his traditional Cree Métis upbringing and its essentially sacred worldview of 'living *with* the land' with his involvement in northern resource industries and the secular perspective required by them, characterised by "living *off* the land." This is also a major theme in Elmer's involvement with Al-Pac: attempting to reconcile the secular nature of northern industry with the sacred nature of Aboriginal culture. Through

reconciling these perspectives and blending industrialism with Cree tradition, Elmer hopes to avoid the necessity for Aboriginal people to repress their culture in order to participate in northern resource industries, as he had to. His perspective is not typical of industry in the North. However, Elmer's vision of a blending of industry and aboriginal tradition is a promising possibility for the future.

The following text was developed from an interview with Elmer outside his home near Edmonton. It was conducted by Dr. David Young and myself in the summer of 1996. Elmer speaks as a scholar, a Métis, and a businessperson directly involved in the community of Wabasca-Desmarais. He discusses Al-Pac's relationship with Aboriginal communities, and some of the initiatives that the company is involved in. He then addresses some of the underlying philosophical issues involved in the relationship between northern industry and northern cultural traditions. The text is supplemented by excerpts from Elmer's Master's thesis, and from statements Elmer made on an Al-Pac video documentary detailing its Aboriginal Affairs policies.

Text: textual material from Elmer Ghostkeeper

> ...I was educated inside the community from grades one to nine. ...During this period my Métis traditional worldview had not changed. I began to experience a shift in worldview when I left the community in 1962 to continue my education and to begin my employment. This was the first time in my life that I experienced living as a minority, first in the classroom and later in the workplace.
>
> The language spoken in both of these places was English, and my education was primarily based upon concepts from Western knowledge. As a result I began to repress my Cree language and traditional knowledge and to adopt a different cultural perspective on life, that of Western knowledge. In short, my worldview was changing on a subconscious level. By the time I returned to my community in 1974, I had repressed my sacred worldview, of making a living *with* the land, and had replaced it

with a secular worldview, of making a living *off* the land...(Ghostkeeper 1996: 33)

...The initial doubt that Métis could possess a Western work ethic was quickly dispelled by the Métis contractors. We demonstrated to the oilmen that clear-cutting, piling, and burning brush was not a difficult task if trees, plants, and wildlife habitat were not viewed as a sacred gift, but rather as something that had to be removed with the use of Cats [heavy machinery] in order for the oil company to develop natural gas for export. The Métis contractors accepted this change from a sacred to a secular worldview of the bush, if they wanted to make a living this way. When my bid for the work was accepted by the oil company, I also repressed my previous sacred worldview and accepted a secular one. (Ghostkeeper 1996: 40)

...[T]he way development used to happen in the north was that the industrialists or the oil and gas companies or forestry companies, whatever exploration company, would come up north and just start doing their thing. Without talking, without consulting with the people or informing the people ... the people wouldn't have any input ... Then usually the people would start asking questions, [but] it was always after the fact. It was after development had been planned and actions had taken place and in a lot of incidences Aboriginal people ... were never listened to. So, it was always sort of a negative impact from that respect. ...There were really never any opportunities in terms of employment or even business opportunities. ...So, I guess they were always playing second fiddle. ...In our minds, we were a part of the land so therefore we should have been consulted. Right up front. And you know a lot of the times we saw the negative impact on the environment. There was just no concern for streams and heavy equipment crossing streams. ...Sometimes chemicals would just run into the water table or surface...water you know. And, and it was ugly. That type of development is pretty ugly.

So when I had the opportunity to work for Al-Pac, right up front, we said we had to develop community relations. And...what we mean by community are people. They should be talked to before any development takes place. They should be...consulted right in the initial stages of the planning and right on through. ...We have established two community relations sub-offices ... [and] community liason specialists that are Aboriginal. ...Information [is] flowing from the company to the community and from the community to the people. So therefore we try to be pro-active. Before any...issue develops into a major problem, we like to resolve it by sitting down and talking to one another.

Another big focus we have is trapping management. There's 463 registered trap lines within our forest...that's roughly 60,000 square kilometres. It's a huge area and in the past, companies have not honoured trapping, but that's livelihood. ...We're one of the first forestry companies, if we're not the only one, that has a trapping management

policy. And under that policy we have two programs, one of them we call trappers notification and trappers compensation. ...We really respect trapping as a livelihood. We want to maintain it and sustain it if we can and...if there's going to be a severe impact then we compensate him. And compensation could take a number of forms. Monetary is one of them, but he may need new logs for a cabin. Or he might need a new trail pushed in or...we might offer him a contract to help us do a fur study...in the area where his trap line is. So when we're harvesting his trap line he's got another source of income.

David: What happens if you have extensive cutting in the area of that trap line? Doesn't that, that pretty well destroy the trap...

Elmer: No...our concept is...what we call ecosystem management. And the underlying paradigm there is natural disturbance. We try to harvest like a forest fire would burn in the area. ...[A] forest fire...burns in many different shapes other than just square lines. We follow the terrain and...we're studying fire. The trappers say...when a fire goes through the area the animals move out, leave home...and then they start coming back after four years. So, as long as, as long as the trapper knows that we're trying...to be as careful as we can, [then] he's in agreement with us.

But, first of all most companies don't tell them...they're going to harvest this trap line. They just move in. More and more oil and gas companies will just cut it, the seismic line, or build a pipeline. ...Then they, then they kind of have to go over the compensation and stuff. With us, it's 3 years before we're even planing to go in. We sit down and show them the area and ask where, where the sensitive areas exist and that sort of thing...

...[W]e have a policy objective on what I call Aboriginal wisdom. And as a company we're, we're committed to aide and researching and collecting and reporting Aboriginal wisdom about the people, plants, insects and animals of our area. And one of the ways we're implementing that is through cultural land use studies. ...[W]e know Aboriginal people have lived in the boreal forest for hundreds, if not thousands of years. And through that time you develop a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience and a lot of spirituality. That becomes wisdom. And what I want to do...through that project...I want to start integrating that in ecosystem management...And I think [that's] what's going to emerge...a new way of looking at the forest. It's a system of all living things. Systems within systems within systems and how they relate and interrelate, etc. As far as I know, no other companies are doing this. For example, ...there's a lot of grave sites [burials] and as we locate the grave site we GPS[2] it. Then we dump that into our GIS[3] system. Then we use

[2] Global Positioning System, this is a technology that uses satellite data to delineate the exact geographic position of a site.

that information when we're designing harvesting plans…or designing a road: the cabins, the trails, the sights where medicinal plants are picked. There're other scared sights we're identifying as well. We say as a company, we respect and honour the spirituality of the people. Also, we respect their worldview. Every living thing is created as a gift by the Creator, and we all have to live equally together. And, like I mentioned, we're going to integrate Aboriginal wisdom and ecosystem management. That's a long-term goal that we work on.

We [also] have cultural training program. [For] every permanent employee, it's mandatory to take the cultural management program, and the trainers are Aboriginal. [W]e…have established a sweat lodge on site and that was done upon consultation with an elder and he agreed to it. Now we have a sacred site on the mill site. …[When] we began, we just took it one day at a time. We didn't want to rush it, rush it, and some of the people at work kept saying "well is this going to happen or isn't it going to happen?" You know things like this have their own process and we have to respect it. And one day it happened, …and then the people that want to come and experience this type of spiritual ceremony, they're certainly welcome. …And I think it's gonna, it's slow, you know what I mean, it's slow but there's got to be respect from both sides.

David: …[In your thesis] you talked about the repression of native spirituality and so on and you get on these machines and…you have cognitive dissonance.

Elmer: Yep. I went through that experience.

David: You went through that…and on the other hand, you're working for a company that…regardless [of] how enlightened its policy is, is still removing forest. That's its job. …I'm wondering how you handle this, what might appear to be a conflict? How do you handle that?

Elmer: …I've handled it 2 ways. First of all, from my experience, because I've worked from both sides of the fence, worked on the other side where I tried to resist development and stuff and people have told me from within this industry don't bother with us, we have a whole army of lawyers. We can tie you up forever in rope if that's the way you want to go…you know the provincial government has a department of economic development. I mean we live, we live in a system of capitalism. …You have to develop, develop, develop, you know - jobs, jobs, jobs. I started off, first of all, by being a civil engineer. …Built roads and sewer systems and things, and I think if it's done right, there's a fit. But if there's a disregard for the environment then it becomes a disaster. And if you work from within there's [a] much better chance to change [it] then from working outside

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[3] Geographic Information System, a complex computer application for managing and analysing geographic data.

and trying to put pressure on somebody to change. As you know if you try to put pressure on somebody, nine times out of ten, they get their back up and they probably just, just do things just to demonstrate their authority and power.

...When I first met these people at Al-Pac, in '88, '89 when I was first approached to do this type of thing, I told them that I'd come down for 4 days, I want to meet the people...and if their hearts weren't in the right place I would've said no. No way I'm gonna work for you guys. But their hearts are in the right place. They really want to do things in the best possible manner as possible.

And whether or not it's Al-Pac doing it or Daishowa or Wayerhouser, whatever you're doing you're going to impact in some way. But if you buy into the sustainable development - you know [my] thesis is to try and sustain a living by only using what you have to use today and try to save for tomorrow. So you're going to sustain it. Also...underlying ecosystem management is this natural disturbance regime. We are systems, and we're trying to model fire. That's a grandfather spirit. ...10 years ago or, ... 15 years ago, this would have never taken place...'cause trees were looked as objects. Objects to be manipulated and converted into money. This company, I think, is leading the way. ...I mean, where, where I'm living now, this is changed from what it was 200 years ago...there's just no getting away from it.

...You know, forestry's probably, if you compare where you're gonna work, ...if you're going to work for the oil and gas industry or agriculture, forestry's the most friendly to the ecosystem. It's much more friendly.

Aboriginal people have used trees ... and animals and stuff for thousands of years...and if you do it properly, if you do it, first of all, ...with respect. Saying this is another living thing. I think there's more, much more acceptance. But if you look back and say that's just an object, that spruce there is just an object, and if we do it right maybe we can get a hundred of them, you know. ...I think it's people. It's the people within Al-Pac. It's, well it's their culture, it's their culture, it's their beliefs, their values, the way they behave...

...I would've never worked for Al-Pac if it wasn't for the people within Al-Pac... they have respect...and their world view is very, very similar. They know it's a system, it's a living, breathing system that has to be respected and sustained, and forestry is the third industry in the province, and it's a huge industry and it has to be done right. And if it's not done right - we're just not gonna have it for our children, for your children. ...It's sort of agreed that the population of the world cannot be sustained, presently, in our standard of living. You can't sustain it. So how do you start doing it then? ...You know you [can] ...give everything up and try to go live back in the forest. Use very little electricity and, is that the way to do it? Or should you try to work from within and know the challenge of change is very, very slow. ...So those are your options I

think, or maybe a combination of them. ...But you know Aboriginal people and other people around the world, we, ...we were led to believe that capitalism was the way to go. You know, to maintain this...standard of living. Using that technology, wearing the clothes you're wearing. ...electricity, natural gas, ...computers now.

Craig: Do you think that current Al-Pac practices respect the spirits of the trees adequately?

Elmer: No, not currently but I think, I think we're heading [in] that direction...as we integrate Aboriginal wisdom with the ecosystem, with science, western science. ...[I think] we have a good chance. ...[T]he majority of the people that work within the woodlands are Aboriginal. A lot of them are [culturaly] revitalised...we can revitalise a lot of others, and there'll be more and more of an acceptance. And there, there might be ceremonies before a harvesting commencing. ...through AART, we always start off our meeting...with a prayer and we always ask forgiveness. You know, and respect.

And we know there's a lot of sacred sites out there like...that we have to [go back to] ...now and maintain. The social and cultural aspects of forestry has been missing. The focus has just been on economics. How do you bring in the balance of the social and cultural aspects of forestry? It's just as important as the economic part and I think there's tremendous room there ... for, for social forestries, and spiritual people.

...You know, there's this other aspect of the world view, and they have it. Their ancestors have had it but we've lost it. We've become so secular. Now, when...they talk about spirituality...within a classroom, it's based on western knowledge. Sometimes you get funny looks. They get these, these young foresters that come in with good concepts and by the time you leave after two years, economics is so pushed into them, they become secular. They look at...how much money does that spend, and...if I push a road in, how much money is that going to cost? You know, all economics driven, rather than looking at other values...and I think that's the challenge, at least for me as a cultural anthropologist working for a forestry company and that's probably a first. I, I don't know of any other forestry company in Alberta [like Al-Pac].

David: In other words you think it is possible to harvest the forest and do it in a truly spiritual manner.

Elmer: I think so, absolutely, yeah.

...This last research project that [name removed] did with us is called... Trying to Save Healing, or Let's Try to Save Our Medicines, our methods of healing of illness and that sort of thing. So he went and interviewed, ...I forget how may elders, but they identified 29 different illnesses that...they could treat, using a variety of medicinal plants that

grow in the boreal forest. And, now as a company we recognised first and foremost that the intellectual property rights belong with these people. What we want this information for…is to be able to protect those sites and those plants.

…I think…that this is Mother Earth. You're a part of it. You're not any more important than that tree you're trying to harvest. …I think that you've got to have respect for that…there's other values, other than just the fibre…there's other values attached to that tree. It has a spiritual value. You really can't put an economic value [on it]. …If they [the people] see…you're listening and you're willing to learn then there's a lot of sharing that happens. But up to this point in time, as you know, Aboriginal people were not really consulted. Are still not consulted by oil and gas companies.

…How do we feed that information and integrate it into the overall concept of sustainable forest management. I think it's a real challenge and there's really no models out there. …It hasn't been done before. And of course you're going to get two spectrums. You're going to get people, scientists, that disregard it, say "aah, that's crazy, you know, that's primitive stuff." And then you're going to get some people that sort of just say "hey, we gotta incorporate it all." [And then] you're going to have some people in the middle that really are going to make it work. …If you looked at, originally when Al-Pac first started logging and what they're doing today. They've come a long ways. …I think there's room for social forestry but I think there's [more] room for cultural forestry…and to try to preserve the cultural integrity. And that was the wisdom. …Even though, you know I, I'm not saying that I disrespect the Pentecostal movement. …The most common thread is that we're people. …first and foremost, those people sleep, and they have to go to bed and wake up. …but underlying we're all still Aboriginal people.

…From an aboriginal perspective, people and all living things have four aspects: mind, body, emotion, and spirit. And the philosophy is that if those four aspects are in balance then you're going to be happy and healthy. But if your body starts to get out of balance with your mind, it opens the door for a disease or an illness to enter. In the same way…if you've neglected your spirit then you become out of balance within yourself and within the environment around you… (Ghostkeeper speaking on Al-Pac produced video, *Working with the People*, 1997)

Hermeneutic Exposition

For Elmer Ghostkeeper the relationship between the forest industry and aboriginal culture is a problematic one. His life and education has involved him in the secular cash

economy of resource extraction and global capital development. However, his identity and worldview demands reconciliation with the traditional wisdom of his Cree Métis upbringing. Elmer has been exceptionally successful in his educational and business pursuits. However, like many other aboriginal people, he has found that success in the activities of the forestry and petroleum industries requires the adoption of a non-Cree world view where the forest and the earth become secular objects to be owned and manufactured into saleable products for the maximisation of profit. The adoption of this paradigm causes conflict and dissonance with the more traditional Cree understandings of the environment as a system that needs to be respected and maintained to ensure our future success and the success of our children. This cognitive dissonance between worldviews can lead to dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and ultimately illness as a result of the imbalances that develop between an individual's mind, body, spirit and emotional or social aspects. Through his life, and especially in recent years, Elmer has sought a way to blend the paradigms of Cree tradition and industrial development so that they can co-exist without the conflict and dissonance that he originally experienced.

Elmer understands the blending of traditional and industrial paradigms to be critical to each other's survival, and to the survival of northern communities and northern industry. The powerful presence of industry in the north cannot be denied, nor avoided, and the financial and material aspirations of Cree people ensure their continued involvement in the Canadian consumer economy. At the same time, Elmer feels that the economies of the north and of the world are heavily reliant on an understanding of the land that is not sustainable. Through blending traditionalism and industry, traditionalism is realised as both viable and valuable, and industry is provided with a more sustainable

future in the boreal forest in terms of its involvement with communities and in terms of maintaining its resource base.

Elmer relates the blending of Cree and industrial perspectives to his upbringing as a Métis, and the historical propensity of the Métis for combining various aspects of Aboriginal and non-aboriginal culture into a new and harmonious whole. In order for this blending process to be effective, there must be a fairly equal relationship between the two in which the integrity of neither is compromised: a 'partnership' must develop. The most critical aspect of this partnership is the development of relationships between industry and community. Interestingly, Elmer also realises that Cree Pentecostals may oppose those policies that recognise and affirm traditional Cree culture and traditional knowledge or wisdom.

In the past, the major failing of industry with regards to Aboriginal communities has been a failure to enter into a meaningful relationship or dialogue through which both parties could learn, participate, and benefit. Elmer accepted a senior position with Al-Pac and has attempted to develop industry initiatives that support and encourage a blending of perspectives through such a relationship between industry and community. The development of permanent community liaison offices, improved programs for training and employing Aboriginal people, and industry programs intended to show respect for ongoing traditional Cree economic and cultural pursuits such as trapping and medicinal plant gathering are examples of these relationship building initiatives.

The programs of cultural education that Elmer and AART have embarked on are, in many ways, even more radical. Elmer feels that the corporate culture of Al-Pac is receptive to new understandings of the boreal forest, and through working from the inside

is trying to educate and enculturate the company into a more respectful relationship with the forest which borrows heavily from the sacred perspectives of Bush Cree tradition. A program of mandatory workshops on traditional Cree philosophies and lifestyles for all permanent employees, and the establishment of a sweatlodge adjacent to the Al-Pac mill site are indications of this enculturation process. Through encouraging a paradigm shift within the forest industry Elmer hopes to bring Al-Pac's philosophy of operation closer to traditional Cree philosophies of forest use, thereby reducing the erosional effects of northern industry upon traditional Cree beliefs and activities, and improving the sustainability of industry in the north.

Elmer feels that this paradigm shift has already begun. While the movement towards viewing the boreal forest as an ecological system is not overtly sacred, it does emphasise the relationships between the forest and various ecological and human forces. This emphasis on relationships resembles, in many ways, the traditional Cree emphasis on maintaining relationships between spiritual and social dimensions and supports, at least in part, traditional Cree perspectives of the environment. Attempts to map and protect sacred and cultural sites within Al-Pac's FMA can be seen as a reflection of this paradigm shift, as can the attempt to understand and mimic the patterns of natural fire disturbance through Al-Pac's cutting practices. The spiritual significance of this later initiative is emphasised in Elmer's recognition that fire is a "grandfather spirit", and as such is critical to the health of the forest and the people.

It should be noted that Elmer left his position with Al-Pac in 1998 after a change in the company's management. Although the issue was not formally discussed, it does highlight the relative instability of Al-Pac's initiatives. As a capitalist corporation, it is

subject to rapid changes in staff with no guarantee of their philosophical leanings, and innovations are always susceptible to the economic bottom line of the company's ability to sustain its profit. If Al-Pac's receptivenes to new initiatives is based on the perspectives of only a few individuals then this instability will be a major obstacle to sustainable development in the north. However, if a dedication to the blending of Cree and industry perspectives is genuine and widespread throughout the company then this syncretism between corporate and Cree traditions is likely to be very fruitful.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Traditionalist Case Study

Who is going to take care of this land?
Who is going to take care of this land?
The mother bear is going to take care of this land.

Who is going to help when you fall down on this land?[1]
Who is going to help when you fall down on this land?
The mother bear is going to help when you fall down on this land.

Who is going to walk with you on this land?
Who is going to walk with you on this land?
The mother bear is going to walk with you on this land.

Who is going to take care of this land?
Who is going to take care of this land?
The mother bear is going to take care of this land.

(English translation of a traditional
Bush Cree prayer song.)[2]

Context: Bush Cree Traditionalism

Sakaw nehiyaw, or Bush Cree traditionalism is as much a way of seeing and understanding the world as it is a way of interacting with it. As a living cultural system it continues to be adapted and reconfigured according to people's needs and the 'directions' received through important visions and dreams. Traditionalism implies a holistic perspective that recognises the various inter-related aspects of reality and life. Traditional Cree healing techniques are inextricably bound to this holistically perceived reality, and the healer and patient engage health and illness in their physical, social, mental and spiritual dimensions. Health and illness are largely understood to come about as a result of one's participation in relationships occurring on a number of levels, be they with

[1] The idea of being helped when down also refers to being healed when sick and being supported when facing difficult times.
[2] This is a loose translation based on one given during an interview with Denys Auger on July 1, 1997.

humans, the environment, or spirit beings or forces (*manito*). Within this context it is also possible to talk about the health of individuals, families, communities, and nations as interdependent levels of systemic organisation, all of which have spiritual, social, mental, and physical dimensions.

The traditional Cree approach to healing is profoundly sacred. All healing knowledge and power is understood to spring ultimately from *Kechi Manito* or *Nohtawinan*, the Great Spirit, Creator, or God. The sacred healing knowledge and power of the Creator is made available to humans through powerful spiritual forces and spirit beings, *manitowak*, such as the bear or the fire, and are often referred to using kinship terms such as grandmother or grandfather. Traditional healers maintain their relationship with sacred reality through prayer and through ceremony, and may receive dreams and visions where spirit helpers or *powaganak* transmit knowledge and power, often in the form of medicinal recipes or healing songs. Ceremonial activity, fasting, abstinence, the observance of taboos, and the making of ritual offerings of food, tobacco, and other items are used to maintain and cultivate appropriate relationships in order to receive and maintain the knowledge and power necessary for health and happiness. Of course, traditional and sacred knowledge is also maintained and passed on to younger generations through the teachings of elders. In *Wabasca* (1960) Vandersteene writes of traditional Cree healing that,

> Thanks to...dreams, the knowledge of the medicinal properties of many tree roots, barks, leaves, and all sorts of plants was revealed to them... God cures his people. Even today, the Indian recites a marvellous prayer when he goes in search of medicinal barks or when he gathers curative plants:
>
> > "O God, whose goodness, more than the power You have given these medicines, gives us hope of cure; may the power of these plants bring us healing in Your mercy."

> Although these plants possess curative power coming from God, healing is still entirely dependent on the free will of God. (Vandersteene 1969: 61)

As discussed in Chapter two, there are various kinds of resources that are critical for traditional Cree healing. These include physical, intellectual, human, and spiritual resources, and all of these are empowered through the sacred dimension. It is within the context of Cree healing ceremonies that these resources come together most powerfully. The physical resources used include a vast range of medicinal plants and animal parts, as well as the materials involved in ceremonial construction and observance. These include the sacred pipes, drums, rattles, medicine bundles, and other ritual paraphernalia used in the various ceremonies. The intellectual resources needed include the knowledge of how to co-ordinate other resources in the construction of an efficacious healing ceremony. These might include knowledge of the ritual protocols or offerings needed, knowledge of herbal formulae and sacred songs, or particular ethical requirements that must be followed. The human resources involved in healing include the various ritual specialists and participants needed for ceremonial activity, as well as the community that supports them. Spiritual resources include the various ancestral spirits, plant spirits and other *manitowak* that are called on to be present at various times during a healing ceremony and who are ultimately responsible for the efficacy of the ritual.

In the northern Bush Cree tradition as it exists in Wabasca-Desmarais there are four major ceremonials that are used for healing of various kinds. These include the *matotsan* or sweat lodge, the *masksimow'n* or tea dance, the *wikokewin*, invitational or ghost dance, and the *kosapachikan* or shaking tent. All of these incorporate the omnipresent rituals of offering tobacco and smoking the sacred pipe, as well as the

singing of medicine songs accompanied by ceremonial drums or rattles. The sweat lodge is the most common traditional ceremony performed in the community and is ordinarily used for prayer and individual healing. The tea dance is often held as a memorial or in recognition of an important day or event. It is an occasion for the entire community to gather, feast together, pray and enjoy themselves. As such, it is an important ceremony for healing social relations and improving community solidarity. The *wikokewin* is often described as the northern equivalent of the plains Sun Dance or Thirst Dance. It is generally held in the spring or autumn, "when the bear stands up or sits down" as Denys Auger puts it. The ceremony takes place at night in a specially constructed oval lodge that generally seats up to one hundred people. Through it the community of the living and the community of the ancestors are able to dance together in a communion between worlds that empowers the participants, affirming the relationship between the living and the dead, and revitalising the sacred power of the medicine bundles that are present. The shaking tent ceremony, widely regarded as being the most difficult and taxing of the ceremonies, is no longer held by anyone in Wabasca-Desmarais[3]. Because of the difficulty and danger involved in this ceremony it is considered a last resort to be attempted only after other healing procedures have failed.

According to the accounts of community elders the religious and healing traditions of the community were in steady decline from the 1950's through the mid-1980's. For most of the 1960's and 70's there were no lodges held in the community. Since the mid-1980's they have enjoyed a partial recovery due, in part, to the work of Denys Auger. Denys was born on the west shore of South Wabasca Lake in 1940. He was

[3] There are, however, several traditionalists in other communities who are known to perform the rite and it is possible that it will be re-introduced to Wabasca-Desmarais in the future.

raised in the community and attended the Anglican residential school when he was old enough. As a youth in the mid-1950's he hunted and trapped, and began to drink heavily in the community. He drank and fought his way through the 1960's and 1970's, battling violence and alcoholism, and spent much of his time in jail. In the mid-1970's Denys drank while on medication and was nearly paralysed below the waist. While lying in a hospital bed in Edmonton he received a vision that told him to go back to his traditions and to his community and he would be healed and walk again. Denys understood that if he did not go back to his Cree traditions he would soon be dead. He began practising the traditions that his father had taught him as a child. Within two years he had recovered completely from his paralysis and from his alcoholism. He went on to work as an aboriginal addictions councillor in Canada and the eastern United States, and was very active in First Nations politics at the local and federal levels. Eventually he returned to northern Alberta and joined the Lubicon Lake Cree to fight for their land claim against the federal government and the power of the multinational pulp and paper company Daishowa-Marubeni International. In the 1990's he left the Lubicon to return to Wabasca-Desmarais where he lives today.

Denys Auger has spent the past two decades cultivating a deep understanding of his traditions and the traditions of his forefathers. He lives in a log cabin at the edge of the reserve near where he was born. He has no electricity, running water, or phone, and tries to live as close to the land and to the traditions of his parents and grandparents as possible. Despite this he is, by his own estimation, only half way along the path to truly understanding things. His perspective is one that is profoundly influenced by the sacred as experienced through traditional ceremony, visions, and dreams, and through these he

carries on a legacy of Cree tradition that is generations old. Denys is active in trying to revive interest in the Cree traditionalism, promoting healing and community revitalisation through the traditions and through sweatlodges, tea dances, and the *wikokewin* ceremony. He is also actively involved in the politics of Wabasca-Desmarais and has become a recognised leader of traditionalism in the community. He is well versed in politics and legal matters and has been influential in the construction of the new band school with its emphasis on Cree tradition and culture.

The following textual material was selected from several interviews that I conducted with Denys through 1996 and 1997 and from an editorial written by Denys for a local aboriginal newspaper that was never published. Denys wrote the article in late 1997 and it reflects many of the issues touched on in our interviews over the previous year. Most of the interviews took place while sitting at Denys' cabins in the course of daily life there. In the evening or early morning, if both of us had time and were in the mood to talk, I would turn the tape recorder on and listen, asking the occasional question. In the text Denys talks about his perspective on Cree tradition and its value, the current state of the community, his attitudes towards industry and Pentecostalism, and on prospects for the future.

Text: textual material from Denys Auger

> My father shared with me many prophecies and predictions that have come down from our elders. He told of a time when there would be many churches battling each other to win converts to their way of thinking. We seem to be in the middle of that time now. Along with the prophecies came directions and sound advice: 'Stay with your belief---a belief that focuses on serving people. Remember that however different we may seem on the outside, we are all praying to the same Creator'...What we have in common is greater than how we differ...God

wouldn't leave anyone out from the gifts of creation. We shouldn't let small differences divide us.

The word 'Cree' is not originally a word of our language. It comes to us from the early French priests and carries a meaning like 'natural Christians'. This was because the values we practised without knowledge of the Bible were very much like what Christ taught (sharing, love, honesty, respect, etc.). These were their first impressions. Later we, as many others, suffered through the attempts of the Roman Catholics to outlaw out spiritual ceremonies and to convert us to their version of Christianity. We still suffer from the aftermath of that era.

We have people who were taught as children that their parents' beliefs were evil and whose attitudes toward our traditions are still dominated by fear and suspicion. We also have alcoholism, high rates of incarceration, suicide, family violence, and sexual abuse all stemming from that earlier campaign to destroy our culture and assimilate us. Let us not forget that this project was fully endorsed and supported by the federal government whose agenda was to subjugate us and take our lands, an agenda which shows little sign of change even today.

Happily, our relationship with the Roman Catholic Church has come full circle. Once again the priests acknowledge the compatibility between the Christian traditions and our ancient traditions. We see pipe carriers who are also practising Catholics and priests who are pipe carriers within the traditions of the sweat lodge. We have received and accepted many heart-felt and sincere apologies for earlier misconduct by members of the Catholic Church. It doesn't make everything all right again over night. However, it does go a long way in the healing direction.

In recent years there has been an upsurge in the old Christian conversion campaign...from the evangelical ministries. These include many grass roots people, good and sincere people in many cases. I don't wish to speak against their personal beliefs when it comes to their relationship with the Creator. Their beliefs are as valid to them as ours are to us and we share the same basic values as I have said before. The problem that concerns me is the reappearance of the theme in the preaching and literature of these churches which targets our sacred traditions as scapegoats. We know that the spread of Christianity historically went hand in hand with European invasion and conquest of lands and peoples all over the world. We know that the messages of the missionaries always waged war against the spiritual traditions they encountered. Just as was done before, these modern-day Christians are taught, and many believe it, that our traditions are evil and that we traditionalists are in the service of the devil.

This kind of ignorance hurts all of us. It also plays into the hands of those political and economic powers who continue to strive to exploit our lands for money in ways that destroy its life-supporting capacity...

As traditional people we have always been taught never to accept hearsay as truth. We have been taught to respect and tolerate other

people's spiritual practices. We have been taught not to draw hasty conclusions about things that we don't know. And we have been taught not to judge others, but leave judgement to God. Ready acceptance of false accusations based on ignorance can ruin lives…imagine how we traditionalists feel when we are summarily dismissed by Christians as being evil…

One interesting thing, however, is also true. When the chips are down and they really need help, these same Christians will come to us for help. We don't turn them away. We want the harmony restored and the divisiveness laid aside.

One serious effect of our separation via religion is that we haven't been able to join together it protect our land from exploitation by government and businesses for resources (trees and minerals) and, ultimately, money. In the process the land, as our life support system, our Mother Earth, is destroyed. While respect for the land and protection of it is close to the heart of us traditionalists, we don't take this stance for ourselves alone. The lives of all of us, whatever our race or belief may be, hinge on the care we give to the land.

The way I see it, if my faith is strong enough, I will put my life on the line for the people and for the land. The…thinking that allows Christians to reject traditional people and yet tolerate the companies who profit from environmental destruction is one that plays upon our insecurities and encourages us not to think or look closely at the bigger picture of what is going on. Where are the powerful and well-to-do people of our communities when there are troubled times on the land? Where are they when we are putting our bodies on the line to stop these companies? Would it jeopardise their subcontracts or grants to participate side by side with us?

We have always been aware of the choices open to us: sell out or sacrifice for the common good. It is too simple to define right and wrong as traditional or Christian. There are people who live lives of goodness and people who make mistakes in any group you can think of…

It wasn't Christ who wanted to set one group against another. That kind of tactic is one of political manipulation…Sadly His name has often been used to justify the very same mob mentality which victimised Him way back then.

We could start by putting aside our differences and focussing on our common cultural heritage, our legitimate claim and ancestral ties to the land, and our responsibility to protect it for the future generations of our children and all life on this, our Mother Earth. Instead of identifying ourselves as members of one group or another, we need to sit down together as human beings and discover that we are still friends and relatives, who love and care for each other. We must not condemn each other or put ourselves above one another.

We must recognise that beyond our goal of stopping further destruction of the land, water and air we must learn to work together with

the white man and with all other races for our survival and happiness here. In truth we are all equal and we all have a right to be difference and exist in our own ways provided we are not harming others…

To me the prophecies and advice of the elders still ring true. There is one Creator we all pray to and before whom we are all equal. We believe we were all put on this land with everything on it. We were given clean air (the wind) to breathe, clean water to drink and clean ourselves, and our fires to heal and warm us. It is, to us Indian people, God's paradise. All of these elements are here to heal us and to keep us healthy. We have to learn to work together with the white man to protect these gifts. (Auger 1997: unpublished)

Denys: …I didn't [get into trouble as a youth] because of alcohol. It was because I was weak. It was because I didn't learn enough, I didn't know enough. It bothered me how my dad was going because he couldn't see…And it bothered me because I couldn't do nothing at the time…When my dad was blind I could have doctored him you know. I wanted that. Instead I turned to alcohol. …But that's the kind of life I lived. [My Dad]…he used to walk on this land right here, right here on the ice and in the boat, you know on the ground and hunt for us, you know. He'd hunt for the majority of the community…he used to give all the time. That's the kind of pattern I'm trying live because he left me what he knew. I know the songs, I carry the songs with me…

…I kind of woke up at the University hospital one time, when I, I didn't listen…I didn't want to listen to anybody. But it was because of alcohol, and it was because of medical that got me partially paralyzed. …It took me a small little drink, and a pill to kind of flatten me back on my, put me on my back. …[I] never did believe in medication, or needles or knives. That wasn't our way. But, there's a spiritual way, there's a spiritual way that I was taught when I was younger, but like I said I didn't listen. I didn't, I didn't want to, to practice. I didn't feel that I, that I had to because my dad was living. I counted on my dad; I counted on my grandfathers, you know, to get me through but…one day they left too. But they always told me that one day I was going to have to live this life…and he [my dad] handed down some of the [ritual] objects for me which I, which I practice. (transcribed interview, July 21, 1996)

…[W]hen I was paralysed in the hospital on white man's medication, that's partly my fault you know. I'd seen a vision, you know. But I practiced that 16 years later. And there was a fire…but I had to follow and walk that. That's where I'm at today. Well the doctors said you know that, that, you'll never walk... That's spiritual. It was meant for me…ever since that time I've left alcohol alone…

…[Some people ask] me for certain medicines…but I don't abuse them. I don't make no medicine to play Bingo. I don't go over there to play with somebody's mind, you know. They're there for a reason but not

for me to abuse. ...They're there to protect people. ...[W]hile you're a true person your grandfathers, your grandmothers are very honest with you. And you tell the people what's happening then. Then from there they should be able to recognise what kind of a person you are. If you mislead them, then you're a liar. You know, if a person, their grandfathers and grandmothers lie all the time and you lie all the time then you're misleading people. If you're an honest man, an honest woman, and you see visions then you say here's what I predict, here's what's shown to me. ...And their medicines will fall right.

You can't work both ways. You can't work bad way here and good way here. You can only walk that fine line, the top one. You can only take that pipe in a good way. Some people have tried both ways but you can't. That's why some people attack other people. But they can't touch your camp [if you are strong]. ...It's all strong belief. You don't play with them. And the more good you are, the more sacrifice you do, the more good spirits that are with you and they'll carry you on this land and watch your camp. And you respect...

...There's quite a few things that's keeping me going. It's the teachings of the elders that have passed on. When I, when I was just a young man, watching these people how proud they were, how tough, how strong they were, with limited resources they survived. Never, I don't think, never cried, but challenged the weather, challenged anything that was for survival. And how they done it was knowing themselves, knowing the land, knowing how to build fires, knowing how to put fires out. Keeping strong within. ...And they used to tell me, times will be a lot harder, prepare yourself today. That's what they were saying. There'll be times you'll help people that will be, that will turn on you and I've seen that. It was just like they were reading a book when they were telling me this. I get so, I have a thick skull, I guess I have a thick skin, I don't let these things bother me.

I feel sorry for people that are so twisted and yet want to find fault... They're too judgmental. They're, they're lost. They're lost within. When you have lost your identity you can talk about it...but you have nothing. You're lost... A lot of people are phony. They're in a mass of confusion. ...What keeps me going is the teachings that I said earlier. Don't be bothered by these people whatever they say. These are the things you're going to be facing one day. Feel sorry for them but we'll watch you from here. I, as tired as I get many times, I still try and do my best. I'm still there to offer something when a person wants to better understand. Got to have my drum...what else do I need? That'll keep me going. If I don't have that, I'd be lost too. And nobody can take away what I have.

I'd love to see people walk with me, not follow me, walk with me and try to learn. A lot of people come here and say oh, this is a nice place...it's easy to say that but [to] live it is another thing. ...Practice what you're talking about. ...The biggest threat they have is themselves. They don't know. They can't think. They don't know how to trap, they don't

know how to make fire, they don't know how to, they're just, they're plastic. All they want to do is take and not give. I have lived in both worlds. ...I learn a little bit everyday but I am not afraid to talk when it comes time for me to talk. My ally is my drum, ...my mouthpiece is my pipe...I respect the little I know for I know it's put me through tough waters. I know it's, it's put me to where I follow directions. What's directed to me I'm not scared to talk about. I don't really talk about it and I will never say that I understand it all but I have a better understanding about what I seen and how I understand and how I interpret my visions. I don't panic even if I'm going through the ice. I don't panic if there's going to be a storm. Rather I know how to, how to deal with that. I don't have to turn up the heat, that the thermostat, I just got to put fire. I just got to put enough starting wood to get me through 'til morning. I'm not going to worry about tomorrow, I'm in a good cabin.

When I think about these things and what I seen, how my dad and the people that have passed on have lived and they still smiled. Kind-hearted people that have passed on and tell [us] here, here's your duty. It's not going to be an easy path. You're going to have it rough. But don't, don't buckle. Don't give in. Don't whine. Use, do the things that we're teaching you and when you will enjoy, we'll be there beside you. When a person is lost during the mass confusion, they don't see, they don't even see that themselves. They figure they're right on. They've lost their identity.

Many times the Pentecostals have come to me for medicines. Many times they've come to me. I've been in the same arenas as them. I'm walking the same land. They know they will never change me. They know that. I'm not trying to change them. I'm not knocking them down. I feel sorry for them. If this, if they're so full of that book, why don't they practice it? Why would they hate people? If you're a true believer in whatever religion, why would you dislike the people that don't believe your way? When I look at it, in a way, how can my own people be Pentecostals when their grandfathers, when their ancestors were dancing around the fires just like we're still doing... It's sad, when their grandfathers and ancestors lived on the land, and they're knocking, they're knocking themselves, they're shooting at both feet. When you look at it deeper and find...that their ancestors and my ancestors shared this land and cared for one another and their religion now turns them to hate people because they don't believe the way they believe. I have yet to see a true [pipe] carrier...talk bad about his people. A true believer does not talk about it, yet you feel sorry for them. They're knocking you and you're still holding their hand trying to help them. They still come right in the same cabin, right in the same cabin as we're talking, when they really need help and ask for some traditional healing, cultural healing. They don't like that word culture. They don't see. The understanding is so limited. 'Culture, oh, I'm not an Indian, I don't talk Cree' and they're blacker than me! That's the sad part. I have nothing against that belief but I know it's not

my belief. I believe, what I believe is what my ancestors, my grandfathers, my father was, I believe I'm walking in that path. I might not be doing as good, I might not be as strong as them, but I'm trying. There's the big difference. When we talked to an old lady today, we talked about certain medicines, how to take them on the land…God's garden was her words. We all live on his land. …So what keeps me going is my fire. What keeps me going is my land. What keeps me going is that drum and that bear and that sun and the land and the water. And my, the ways that I didn't practice right away. Nobody will ever take that away from me, nobody. The little that I know is what keeps me going.

…Perhaps the bear is with me. The bear is for the people. …It has saved a lot of people when they were hungry. It has come to you to give you warnings: the protector of the land. Use the bear right. Respect the bear. It'll be with you. …Be nice to the animals, don't abuse them. Don't over slaughter. Leave certain beings alone. Protect the bear that's protecting you. Respect the bull [moose] that's protecting you. Don't play with that gun, that's for survival. …They're not meant to take your life, but play with that fire, you get burned. Respect that fire, you'll heal. It's a healer, it's a protector. It's got spirit. Years ago people used to communicate through that fire, maybe some still do. The healing power's in that fire. The healing, the healing power's in the drum. The healing power's about the bear. The healing power's about the, about the bull. The healing power's in the pipe.

… Your strength comes from your fire. You're strength comes from knowing who you are. Your strength comes from practicing who you are, knowing who you are. That's where the strength comes. It's believing in yourself, thinking for yourself, seeing for yourself, understanding your wisdoms for yourself. Being a, being a proud person, not more than anybody, not less than anybody. You're an equal.

… I could have been out there this winter making two, three hundred bucks a day [working for industry]. But it's against my belief. I cannot support it and keep damaging my own land because of money. [But] it's good to have money, it's not too good to be broke. (transcribed interview, Feb 28, 1997)

Hermeneutic Exposition

For Denys Auger, the knowledge and sacred ceremonies of Bush Cree tradition are vital resources for healing. They are received through connections to the power of the ancestral past and must be maintained into the future for the continued health and well-being of Wabasca-Desmarais. If recognised, Cree traditional knowledge and culture

could provide a foundation for the community rooted securely in the history of the land and the community. In order for this to happen the factions within the community must respect each other's beliefs and work together rather than fight against each other.

As a youth, Denys' descent into alcoholism and violence is seen as the result of a lack of knowledge and the weakness that sprang from not having a strong sense of culture or identity. His lack of knowledge and his inability to listen caused him years of suffering and unhappiness until he was nearly paralysed from a mixture of alcohol and improperly prescribed pills from a physician. His doctor told him he would never walk again. However, while lying in his hospital bed Denys saw himself walking again inside a sweat lodge. This experience crystallised his distrust of biomedicine and spurred him to return to the traditions he had been taught as a child. After years of neglect he returned to the traditions of his father and grandfather. Through a combination of personal sacrifice and traditional Cree medicine, and with the help of his "grandfathers and grandmothers", he was able to re-establish his ties to his cultural roots, rekindle his spiritual "fire" and recover from his paralysis.

Denys does his best to respect his medicine, his knowledge, and the sacred gifts that have been given to him. Through this respect for tradition, Denys is able to participate in and strengthen his relationships with spiritual reality. These relationships are reciprocal in nature, and through prayer, sacrifice, and humility a person may receive healing power, spiritual guidance and prophetic dreams. One of the obligations inherent in participation in such relationships is the responsibility to use the gifts received to help those in need without asking for anything in return. These gifts of power can, however, also be used for negative ends as well as positive ones.

The old Cree traditions and the teachings of elders who have passed on provide a constant resource of strength and resilience for Denys. Denys' involvement with community politics, land claims, the Lubicon and the new band school reflect his activist stance, and these sometimes clashes with his roles as an elder and healer. As a traditionalist leader, Denys must walk a fine line between political charisma and the humility and quiet strength that is expected of an elder and healer. In the application of traditional Cree healing knowledge the traditional practitioner must maintain his or her relationship with helper spirits or *powakan* through ceremonial obligations. The issues of relationships, conflicts, and politics are major ones for Denys.

In Denys' understanding the God of the Bible and the Creator of Cree tradition are one and the same, though they may work through many other *manitowak*, spirits, or grandmothers and grandfathers. It is from God the Creator that all healing and power ultimately comes, and through ceremony and ritual our relationships with the spirit world can be realised. The antagonism of the Church run residential schools is recognised as having had a disastrous effect on the way Aboriginal people see themselves, their culture, and their history. In order to resolve many of the social problems in the community the colonial legacy of the residential schools and of colonial federal policy must be overcome. Despite the historical conflicts between the Church and Aboriginal peoples, the Catholic and Anglican traditions have now become thoroughly syncretised or blended with Cree understandings and rituals.

Denys sees a number of very significant problems in Wabasca-Desmarais. One of the reasons that he lives in his cabins, away from the majority of the community, is because he perceives a great deal of sickness within the main community. He recognises

that the community's problems, including alcoholism, abuse and family violence are strongly linked to the erosion of Bush Cree culture and to confusion regarding personal and cultural identity within the community. He traces the roots of these problems back to the disempowering legacy of the residential schools and to the divisiveness of federal policies intended to assimilate Aboriginal people into mainstream society. In his view, regardless of the original causes, most of the problems currently facing Wabasca-Desmarais need to be healed from within; they require the involvement of the community in order to be resolved. Denys feels that the key to resolving many, if not all, of these problems lies in the knowledge and wisdom that has been passed on from previous generations and that results from traditional lifestyles lived close to the land. Such knowledge provides a strong sense of cultural identity that gives the strength and conviction needed to survive in a difficult world. He talks about the majority of people within the community as being twisted and lost, and sees the difficulties that he has experienced in reviving the traditions of the community as a necessary sacrifice, foretold in the prophetic dreams of his father.

Denys recognises that much of the current opposition to the revitalisation of Cree culture and tradition comes from within the community rather that from outside it. The principal source of this opposition is the Pentecostal church. Denys feels that the Cree Pentecostal path involves a denial of Cree tradition and Cree culture, as well as a denial of one's ancestors and one's past. While becoming Pentecostal is recognised as a matter of personal choice, the opposition of the Pentecostal movement to Traditionalism is seen as a continuation of the colonial stance of the Anglican and Catholic Church. Furthermore, the divisiveness resulting from Pentecostal animosities towards tradition

has split the community and reduced its ability to deal effectively with the environmental and social threats posed by industrial development and northern change.

The animosities of Pentecostalism are taken as an indication of corruption and a lack of spiritual understanding on the part of church members. While Denys does not consider the Pentecostal church to be an obstacle to his own traditional practices, he does consider it to be an obstacle to the continued transmission of traditional Cree values, practices, and beliefs. In order for the community to come together again both traditionalists and Pentecostals need to focus on their similarities rather than their differences. This spirit of co-operation and reconciliation must inform relations with non-Natives as well. This needs to occur, not only for the benefit of the community and its traditions, but also for the well being of the land and of future generations.

While Denys portrays the influence of Cree Pentecostalism as largely negative, the role of industry is more ambiguous. Denys understands the economic necessity of industry and the material needs and wants of community members. However, he also recognises that industry takes a great deal more from the land than it gives back. While involvement in a cash economy has its benefits, Denys feels that it involves a treatment of the land and of relationships that is antithetical to his traditionalist views. As a result, his personal choice is to avoid employment in industry in order to maintain the integrity of his relationship with the land and with sacred reality.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Born-Again Christian Case Study

> When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what looked liked tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. (Acts of the Apostles: 2.1-4)

> …[and God said] I will pour out my spirit on everyone.
> Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message;
> your young men will see visions,
> and your old men will have dreams.
> Yes, even on my servants, both men and women,
> I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
> and they will proclaim my message.
> I will perform wonders in the sky above
> and miracles on the earth below.
> There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke;
> The sun will be darkened
> and the moon will turn as red as blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes.
> And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.
> (Acts of the Apostles: 2.17-21)

Context: Bush Cree Pentecostalism

Prior to the 1960's, Wabasca-Desmarais was dominated by the Anglican and Catholic churches and the government-funded residential schools that they ran. The intentions of the residential schools were not only to educate Aboriginal children and convert them to Christianity, but also to prepare them for, and assimilate them into, Euro-Canadian society. For most of this century the colonial presence of the Churches and residential schools enculturated the children of Wabasca-Desmarais with strongly anti-traditionalist views. Children were routinely punished for speaking Cree, and attempts were made to replace traditional Aboriginal values and livelihoods with those of the

Christian and Canadian main stream. In the 1950's and 1960's the anti-traditionalist stance of both Churches was significantly altered, largely influenced by Roger Vandersteene, the Catholic priest mentioned in chapter two. At the local level the process of syncretization between Anglican and Catholic doctrine and local religious traditions was certainly well underway by the middle of this century. However, until Vandersteene, the official stance of the Catholic and Anglican churches and their residential schools was that traditional Cree beliefs were primitive, pagan, and should be abandoned entirely in favour of Christianity (Waugh 1996, Vandersteene 1960).

In the 1960's, with the advent of new roads to benefit the development of industry in the area, the community was opened up to other denominations of Christianity. The most successful of these was Pentecostalism, a movement of fundamentalist Protestant Christianity that began in the early 1900's in the southern United States. The Pentecostal movement is made up of independent or free churches, as in Wabasca, as well as churches that are affiliated with a more centralised Pentecostal authority. Pentecostal teachings emphasise personal salvation through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and a direct relationship with the divine as experienced through visions, dreams, and emotional prayer. The Bible is understood to be the inspired Word of God, and the end of the world, with the return of Christ as judge and redeemer is considered to be imminent. Because of the importance and immanence of this Second Coming, anything that does not serve God tends to be considered unimportant, and anything against God considered evil. In the Pentecostal worldview, traditional Cree culture and knowledge are at best unimportant, and are more commonly viewed as immoral, dangerous and evil. For Pentecostals old ways and old failures are washed away in the ritual of baptism as the convert is 'born

again' into a new life, purified by the Spirit, and part of a new community founded in God. As elsewhere, Cree Pentecostal services are characterised by ecstatic and emotional prayer, clapping, singing, and amplified gospel country or rock music often accompanied by faith healing, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), and other manifestations of being 'touched by the Spirit of the Lord'. In the summer services are often held over a weekend and located in a large tent with a stage and chairs set up inside. The atmosphere of these tent meetings is festive with references to it being a "party for Jesus". They provide quite a departure from the formalised and often sedate services of Anglicanism and Catholicism. English is the dominant language at the meetings but sermons are often delivered partly in Cree.

Although Pentecostal preachers began visiting Wabasca-Desmarais in the early 1960's they never had the coercive or hegemonic power that the Catholic and Anglican missions claimed. Despite this, a number of charismatic Cree followers found the Pentecostal message attractive and converted to its ministry. This early Cree congregation then spread the ideas of Pentecostalism throughout the community. This internal focus has meant that Pentecostalism in Wabasca-Desmarais is a largely community-based phenomenon. It is not the result of outside coercion, but has instead been adopted by community members as a result of individual experiences and appreciation of its theology and its approach to God and the world. Since the 1960's this has resulted in an interesting paradox. While the priests and ministers of the Anglican and Catholic churches are non-Cree from outside the community, they tend to be tolerant of Cree religious tradition, and often actively support it. The leaders of the Pentecostal movement in Wabasca-Desmarais are almost entirely Cree and from the community, yet they strongly oppose traditional

Cree beliefs and rituals, considering them to be akin to Satanism and devil worship. This split in the community between Pentecostalism and a syncretic blend of Catholicism, Anglicanism, and traditional Cree beliefs is characterised by a fair degree of hostility, particularly within the arena of band politics. In interviews this lack of solidarity amongst community members was almost universally recognised as a major hindrance to the community's ability to address effectively concerns regarding the environmental and socio-cultural impacts of the area's booming resource industries.

One of the key figures in the establishment of the Pentecostal faith in the community was Paul Hunter. He was born in 1918 and raised in the Anglican residential school at Wabasca. As a young man he worked at a number of jobs including hunting and trapping, hauling freight, and building some of the first roads into the community. He turned to alcohol in the 1940's and had developed a serious drinking problem when, in the early 1960's, he received a vision from God. In this vision he received instructions to set up a new church in the community, 'a new road to heaven', and soon after realised that Pentecostalism was the path he was meant to follow. Paul stopped drinking and began preaching in the community. Over the past thirty-five years he has been instrumental in creating a vibrant Pentecostal congregation in the area. Several of his sons have become preachers and the family continues to be a major force in the Pentecostal church of Wabasca-Desmarais.

The following text was developed from several interviews I conducted with Paul through 1996 and 1997. All of the interviews were conducted in Paul's home at the north end of North Wabasca Lake, always with a Bible nearby for easy reference. My affiliation with Denys Auger and other traditionalists in the community made my first

encounters with the Pentecostalism somewhat tense. However, I was always impressed with Paul's charismatic speaking style and profound sense of faith. In the text he discusses his understanding of God and religion, his views of traditional Cree beliefs and medicine, the role of industry in the community and openly shares the visionary experiences that led him to become a Pentecostal leader.

Text: textual material from Paul Hunter

Paul: It was in sixty four, eh, 1964 [that the Pentecostal church began in Wabasca]. …Some reason the Lord showed me those two churches and He says, 'I want you to start right here, in the middle.' So I did. I didn't go to this church, I didn't go to that church. I started up with the Word of God….

We had a pastor here for nine years. …At that time when he prayed for me he told me that, this liquor habit, it's broken. You will never want anything to do with it again. So he was perfectly honest. You know, I see people going back, going back, but with me it's been different. I dropped that last drink and that was it. I know it's not my work. I know I got nothing to brag about on it. I know it's all the mercy of God. But it's been wonderful, really wonderful….

…It's a marvellous thing. Oh, sometimes I just weep before God and cry for His mercy. An old drunkard like me. Gets me all the time. I thought nobody loved me. I used to walk up and down along this, like, wall we had with just a little, little trail, eh, along the lake, before anything. Only transportation we had in that time was the lake. We canoed, paddled by canoe. We had a little trail along the edge a bit before, before the wagons came in. And there was a time when the wagons came in, when this road was cut. I worked on it when I was, I was about seventeen years old, I first started from Wabasca cutting this road … I was born in 1918. You can go from there, add on seventeen years and you get the year [1935] …Twenty five years ago it was just wagon road…The highway came in not too long ago. Back then, a way back then, all we had was those two churches, the Roman Catholic church and the Anglican church, residential schools on both … kids were in there for the winter and summer they had two months holiday and they would be back to school. I was in there for eleven years, myself. My mother passed away when I was four years old, going on four. I was dropped in there. I finished the grades they had when I was fifteen. Then I had to work for another year to make up for that sixteen…you had to be in there, in school…till you

sixteen, eh…So I worked…around the farm, milking cows and you know, gardening and everything else we had to do. Wood we got in. There was no electricity at that time. Hardly any gas...I remember perfectly well the first plane that came around here…

That was, that was the history of our life...As I said I was just young when I came out of school, when I was sixteen, still a lot of trapping in that time. I never got married till I was twenty-five years old. Today I have thirteen children…They're all living. I got about fifty grandchildren…The Lord has been very merciful to us…So that's how my life started. I never got to any real drinking then, till I was about - after I got married I began to drink heavily. Drank with my wife most of the time…

[The Catholic and Anglican churches], they were here first. Well they have their, the old cults, they have the old beliefs, eh? …Ever since the people have been around they've had some, something to believe in. Some kind of made-up cult of their own and that's what has been going on until I think the Roman Catholic priest was the first one to go into this area and so after, the Anglican…they built a small church then. Lot of people used to come to that place. That house, the Anglican started it. That's a long time…

Craig: …The Anglican and the Roman Catholic faith, is that good enough? …Can people be redeemed through the Anglican or Catholic church?

Paul: Well, not really, I guess … Not, not really. 'Cause the Word of God says you, we must be born again, eh? We must be born of the Spirit of God. Say, we are in first Corinthians, chapter two, there, it tells you that we are just carnal, eh. We only have the mind of, of a man, eh. That's all we … were before, before anything happens to us, in our life. Until, until the Holy Spirit comes into your life. As I said there a while ago, we're just clay, eh. We're just clay, but then the Word of God, God breathes life into us at that time. This is why man is alive because of the life that's been breathed into him. But that life that's been breathed into him has got to grow. And it's got to grow according to the Word of God, you see. God, Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Light.' … Only him. So therefore you put the Roman Catholic against us and you begin to see that, you know, they're somewhere off the line. Cause they're not, they're not following the truth of the Word, you see? …

That's what Jesus was talking about when he said 'As you have sent me so have I sent them.' We're still sent the same way [as Jesus], but we're lacking. We should be doing more…We should be in there, we should be working in the power of God, we should be walking in the spirit of God in the anointing of God. People should be getting healed, delivered, set free. …We have that equipment but we don't stir it up to make it work … But it's a marvellous thing, when you come to realise…

Craig: You talked a little bit about how it sounds to you, that old cult, with the pipe and everything. Do you think that's a stumbling block for some of the people around here?

Paul: Yeah, it is a great stumbling block 'cause people are coming back to it. You see? And…they're not getting delivered. So whatever they're believing in, it is not doing them any good. When you accept Jesus Christ into your heart, you will be a different person, you see. I was a drunkard as I said. I was a drunkard for twenty-five years. But when the Lord had mercy on me, gave me this new life, that was the end of my drinking, see. And not only that, a lot of things went away and there's still things to go away. …We need to be separated from this world. We don't have to get into everything that goes on, it's not for us. The Word of God says 'I am not of this world. Therefore you are not of this world.' Jesus tells us Himself, He's not of this world. He said… 'My ways are not your ways. My ways are highest and high as the heaven is above the earth so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.' That's right…

I was thinking about the creation of God this morning. I was standing out there and I thought about the creation of God. He said 'Look at that creation.'…It keeps coming and it's gone and it's up again and it's gone. Pretty soon I was looking at the leaves. They're beginning to turn, eh. They're beginning to turn. Pretty soon all the trees are bare. Then comes spring again, the leaves will be - see? He keeps providing, He keeps providing. Tremendous picture. Ah, there's so many things to learn, there's so many things. …I've heard people say, I've said it myself- 'Oh there's a big rain.' Rain. Lot of people don't like that rain, eh? They begin to criticise the rain. What are they criticising? They're criticising the Creator 'cause He's the one that's the making it rain. The sun got a little too hot these past three or four days, people don't like that heat. I don't either. See? Still, it's the creation of God. We can't argue about it. (laughs)…But that's the way people are. They like to grumble about this…Can't understand the creation of God. This is, I was quoting the scripture, Psalm 66, it says, 'The Earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof.' It's the Lord, okay, it's not man, but man thinks it's his. (laughs) Try and run it the way he thinks. (laughs) Never mind the Creator.

Craig: …I've heard people criticise the born-again religion …because they're too occupied with that afterlife, what'll come to you afterwards and…not concentrating on what's going on in a community right now.

Paul: Yeah. Well, as I've said, …I don't think the Lord would have us concentrate too much on…what's going on, eh? If you read Romans chapter twelve, Paul says that 'I've received you therefore brethren by the mercies of God as you present your body a living sacrifice.' That tells me that the, I have no right to any other thing, only to try and follow the Lord.

...That tells me I can't go on what I, what I think....And first Corinthian chapter six and verse nineteen, he says, he says, 'You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your soul which are God's'. ...there's a scripture there. I never remember exactly where it is, but it says, ...'what the Father has not planted shall be rooted out.' But you can't root it out of the world, we got to start rooting it out of own lives. Whatever God has not planted, whatever is not of God, ...And it's got to be followed right to the end of the root, so everything comes out and nothing's left. (laughs) Make sure it doesn't grow again, eh?...

Craig: ...What do you think about...the teaching of the Cree language in schools and things like that, teaching Cree culture and things like that?...

Paul: Well, I don't mind the Cree language, as long, as long as they don't come to their... to that cult of their own - something that they have made with their own hands. That's what people are doing in many reserves today. They're setting up idols. Maybe...we don't see them, you know, stuck up in front of houses, but maybe they got them back there, somewhere around the edge of the bush...There's people today that have gods made out of their own hands. They put clothes on them and mark them. I believe, I believe in Isaiah 46, it tells us this, [reading]'They make their own gods, and they worship the gods that they have made with their own hands.' See? That's going on today. ...I know one man, he's out in Bear Lake right now. He told us a lot of times that before he came to the Lord that they had, they had this statue they made in the, at the edge of the bush there. They put a beaded jacket on him and all, just fixed it up like somebody standing, eh? But that god can't talk. That god doesn't see. ...I wouldn't want to have a god that doesn't talk, a god that doesn't see. (laughter) But that's the ancient belief, you see? And if anyone wants to go back to it I'll have no part of it. Okay? I just don't like anyone who teaches it because it's not going to get anybody anywhere...The cult doesn't deliver people...

You see the old, quite [a few]...got braids on them [braided hair] over at the other end. See, they have their big peace pipe, they smoke, go to their tepee and then they - you know. That can't deliver them. But that's the old belief. As far as the language Cree is concerned, I wouldn't want to lose that. But I wouldn't mind losing all the cult that they had, 'cause that's not delivering anybody. Only Jesus Christ delivers a man from the power of hell. Only the precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanses a man. There's no cult that'll do it. There's no religion that'll do it. It's only the blood of Jesus Christ. It cleanses man.

Craig: A lot of those people claim, through different ceremonies and stuff like that, there's healing going on...

Paul: Yeah. Well, I don't think there's really anything to it as long as you don't go believing on it too hard...Make the roots, you say, eh? They boil roots for, you know, for various things. My dad was good at that. He had big, always had a big bag of roots and stuff like ... He'd put in different kind of roots, I don't know what was all in it, then gives it to the man that was sick whatever certain sickness that he had. It's just like the doctors. Every one of these doctors can give you pills. You go to the next doctor and he will give, 'Oh those pills you're using, you shouldn't be using them. These, use these.' ... See, but that cult...you come down to the things of this world...if they boil up roots, [it's] just roots...

...I've laid in enough hospitals...and I've come through terrible, terrible operations. No I never thought I was gonna come through this [triple] bypass [points to chest]. Not until, not until the Lord showed me that I was coming through. He showed me exactly how it was going to be and how I was going to come through. ...The Lord showed me I'm going right through. And there's, the...nurse and he says, 'Maybe you're right, maybe you're wrong, John.' When I seen this vision, of a hallway, and at the end of the hallway there was a double door, but it was open. And all I could see was iron, iron, like, like spears or something like that, just going this way [bringing hands together rapidly]. There wasn't a place where you can stick your hand without having it cut off. As we were walking, I was walking with somebody here, I don't know who it must have been. To me, to my knowledge it must have a been a spirit because when we came to this door, we stopped there. I never said a word, and all of a sudden he was gone. I could - the end of him I could see was more like smoke going through and that was all. I stood there for a little bit. I could hear noises singing songs, happy noise ... All of a sudden he stands here again. He says, 'You stand here. You stand here, just a while. You're going to go through this.' Puff, and he's gone. Now when I knew I had to go through, going through something real hard. I don't know what it is, but I'm going through it. And it was this operation that I had to go through. I couldn't understand it at first...

...A lot of people ...don't believe in miracles today, eh? God can do miracles today. I haven't seen too many miracles to speak of. But I have seen some people getting, you know, getting prayed for and getting healed just overnight, the next day they're up walking around. Sick people. I've seen people that have growths on their face as big as cutting an apple in half. Inside of a week it's gone. ...Being healed through the power of God, not the church. ...Zachariah, chapter four, verse six, 'it's not by might, it's not by power, it's by my spirit sayeth the Lord.'...

...To my knowledge of the Word of God I believe we got the great and final test coming up. And I don't think it's very far. We study Revelations thirteen. We're in for another great war and I believe the Devil is winning this one this time, but this is where the mark is going to be set up. The mark of the Antichrist. It tells you plain, so plainly. To me, it's the last and final trial. I know there are people preaching today

that they want to get out of here before tribulation, they're going to rapture. It would be nice if...we're all going to be here for the trial...

Craig: Do you think that old, that traditional way is one of the dangers?

Paul: Yeah, that Satanist way, that traditional way ... is. It's about number one ... And I - we got a new chief today, eh? New chief elected. He's not, he's not actually a Christian, he's - he's going on that way but he's not fully persuaded yet. But the one that we had wasn't a Christian either. He came to the Lord, prayed with Him a number of times and he kind of backslid. But he'd been a chief for four years. And he done a tremendous job. Then we got, another one got elected last night ... and that man is on the cult side. But there is another brother, a younger brother of his, he's a Christian brother. He's a councillor...one of these people that likes setting up dances, you know. Powwows, might be...

Craig: ...Do you think maybe there might be a possibility of the Born Again's being able to keep that [Cree culture] going? Are the Born Again's and the Traditionals cooperating on it ...?

Paul: It'll continue along, eh? Take the forest fire for instance - I've been a firefighter for years. Joined forest fighting when I was about seventeen years old and I been there with them all the time, till about nine, maybe nine, ten years ago...But it's just the same... The government now is stopping the fire, eh? But the fire was put there to...re-model the world, that's what I say. There's a lot of this old stuff that we don't need. The forestry's determined to keep it there, eh? But it's not doing very much good because it's, it's already dead. You let the fire clean out, we would have a new, a new generation of life. So that's, that's one way of looking at it... See it needs to be cleaned up. You look at this world today - two, three years ago around in the bush, it was snowing about that deep [motions with hands], and I made a fire there and I was...looking at the snow, looking at the marks there. You can tell where the old, where the new snow had fallen, eh, there's a mark there. You see about three of four marks in the snow. Those are sort of black marks, you see. It's the, the pollution that's coming down on the snow. That melts here and comes in the ground...Now if we had, if we had a cleaning of this, there'd be a lot of this cleaned out...by fire ...

Craig: ...Your grandparents and great-grandparents, they never had the opportunity to read a Bible. They never had the opportunity to hear the Word of God. That seems...[to mean] they were never given the opportunity to be saved. Is that true or...?

Paul: No...I wouldn't, wouldn't actually call it true,...The word of God says there in Genesis that 'Today, I have given you, I have given you

understanding to know what is right and what is wrong.' And then again when it talks about preaching it says 'The Word is being preached throughout the world,' you see. It's already been preached throughout the world. Maybe not human preaching as we would call it...but God has put [it] into the hearts of people to know him...Whether they read the Bible or not. Therefore when this man has had this knowledge of God...and he looks at the Word, here is what he had, you see? Here's exactly what has been taught to him ... It came to him through the Spirit in the first place, gives him knowledge and understanding. Now...it's coming on written paper and he looks at that, 'Oh, that's, I know this before.' It becomes light to him. ...The Word of God says that there is no one that can know the truth unless God draws him to the truth, you see. So therefore it's got to be God moving somehow. Maybe not through ink and paper, you see. But through His own spirit, as we say, eh? Through His own talking to people. Whichever way. Whether by vision or you know a lot of it's been taught by visions, and a lot of it's been taught by dreams. Various ways...I don't know, I don't know all the routes. I certainly don't know all the routes. (laughter)...

... [It's a] marvellous picture, it's a marvellous - ...The point is to me, ...is knowing the Word of God. That's...my biggest belief is knowing the Word of God. If I hadn't known the Word of God the way I do, with all your questions, I wouldn't have answered any of them. I wouldn't know...It is an amazing thing. You know, I've often said that the, I don't think there's a word that can really describe it, amazing is not quite enough. There's more, there's a depth of it yet, eh? ...

...I love those words where Paul says 'By the Grace of God I am what I am.' That's true. That's true with every one of us, eh? Only by the grace of God we are what we are today. And that God brought me this far where I am today, I wouldn't be here today, with all the heart trouble that I came through, battles that I've come through. One time, before I came to the Lord, I was a drunkard, as I said. Now in the last party I was in, there was a number of us, I don't remember all the names of men that were there, I'd already had a taste of the Lord but I wasn't, I wasn't really persuaded. And then there was fighting, somebody was fighting in there and oh, there was a big mess in our home there. Finally everybody was gone. ...I picked up my 33 rifle and I put a shell in it, and it was a tent, some, maybe fifty yards away from the house. I went over to that tent and I, I said to myself, 'This is it. I'm not living anymore.' I held that, with this hand I held my hand on the barrel, sucking on my head here, and with my thumb I had the trigger. Suicide. I was going to blow my head off. Had it not been for the mercy of God I would have done it. God stopped me. I was so mad when I couldn't press that trigger with this thumb. I walked and I was stupid and I was out of my mind. I had all my kids sleeping in that house, I came in there, kicked the door open and with this 33 cocked, loaded, I threw the rifle down on the floor because it wouldn't go off.

Thank God it didn't go off there either…God brought me through, you see? That was the last drunken party I was in…

…I thank God for what He's done for me, and what He's doing for my children today … It should be a great reverence of God for all the work that He's done, everything that He's done for us. What are we? 'God so loved the world He sent down' - John, chapter one, three, third chapter – 'God so loved the world that He gave, He gave his only begotten son.' Nobody asked Him to do it. We didn't ask Him to do it, but He just gave it to us. (transcribed interview, August 31, 1996)

Look at all the work that there is today... Towards the end…of my [time] there was quite a few mills but there was no sign of any oil…Nobody ever dreamt of it. At least native people didn't know anything about it they didn't know they were sitting on oil till not too long ago - marvelous, marvelous. It's a marvelous life when you really think of it, because the way things change from one thing to another. I've often thought to myself…I wonder what God's gonna provide next in order to keep the people alive. Oil and gas is not going to last all the time eh. But now what are we gonna be supplied with next? (laughing). You know that's what I've often thought eh. I wonder what the supplies are gonna be next. It's a marvelous thing…when you really think of life.

…I think were facing a real unfortunate time. …Ah, the word of God tells us plainly that there is a time coming for this mark, yeah the mark of the beast coming up and we seem to be right on the edge of this thing. It's already happening in various countries uh. And it's coming in, coming in rapidly into this world , into our area yeah - round the year 2000 there's gonna be a tremendous change. …It says there that all the people that are gonna follow the lord - in a clean a life as it were, well they're gonna be divided because they won't they won't go for this antichrist system eh. Because they're trusting God with all their hearts and they have experienced God. They know what God has done for them therefore they will not depart from that but they'll hold on to that now. This antichrist is a work of the enemy, a work of the devil…

Craig: You were one of the first people in the community to not be Anglican, not be Catholic, but to be born again. Right? I'm interested in how you came to be that, I mean, that must have been…

Paul: It was Easter morning. I didn't know that was the beginning of it but then all of a sudden I, I was sleeping and I dreamt seeing a man. White garment down to his feet, coming up on this…up to my road there. He didn't come very close, within a stone's throw, he comes. And he says, 'come on, I want to speak to you.' So I, in my dream I thought I, I walked out [on] a little board, a platform there, 3x3 feet wide. And I thought I stepped on that. And this man I was dreaming of spoke to me and he said, 'I want you to work here.' So he put his hands in the water there…right in

the corner there. Sort of back a bit, but there was nothing there to work. I didn't know what to do. He said, 'I want you to start, you see these two highways, you see these two roads, one here and one over here. I want you to start a road here, in the middle.' And as he, as he done this I wanted to start a road, the highway. Great, great big highway. Wide highway. So he said I can start it. 'Are you going to use this?' And here I could see big houses, warehouses, with a big wide door on it. 'Can you open that door?' That door was packed right to the door with groceries. I didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't understand. I didn't pay very much attention either because I, I was just new you know. Then about a month and a half later, 2 months, again he came in my dream and I saw this man coming. Same, same one that I saw...

A month and a half or maybe 2 months, I dreamt again this man coming, walking up and he stopped about the same place, come on out I got something to tell you. I went out. He tells me the same thing, 'see these two roads?' Now I didn't know these roads until years after. These 2 roads represented the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church. 'See, just look a ways down there at where these roads end.' Of course it looked like it was going over a hill. But he says, he says that's where they end. 'I want you to make a highway that will go on.' I couldn't understand it but I was getting near to it. ...Now he wanted me to speak the word which I didn't know very much. I didn't know, especially then. I didn't know what this was. He said, he said to me, he said don't you worry about anything. This is what you'll use. And he just seemed to stretch his hand across the field like that and there was nothing but boxes, boxes, and the field was just piled with boxes. 'Yes, this is what you will use and you will not run out.' Now, I didn't understand what that was either you see. I seen these preachers, I seen these preachers passing a plate around, you know.

Down through the years I began to understand what he was talking about. ...First he said, he showed me this big warehouse. Big door on it and it was packed with groceries. He told me that I wasn't to pass the plate around for any collection of any kind. So, I put that to one side. I just trusted him. I had begin to trust him. It's been marvelous to this day. I preached the word for over 20 years and there isn't a man anywhere seen me pass the plate around for money. ...He says he was the supplier and he was going to supply. And he has been the supplier. He's surprised me many times.

...He told me one thing. When he told me, you begin to build it, and I saw these people as they began to work, various ones worked. I seemed to be the foreman. I didn't know what it was. And this man, one man there... - the Lord seemed to point at him. And I went over to this man and I tried to see what he was working with - a very, very powerful tool. He was knocking down trees and everything. I couldn't understand what it was for a while. I kept searching - I began to see it was the Word of God he had in his hands. [It was] a Bible he was going along with! (transcribed interview, January 18, 1997)

Hermeneutic Exposition

Paul Hunter's life is full of the blessings of the Lord. Ever since he made the choice to put his faith in Christ and follow His directions to build a spiritual highway for the community, the Lord has provided for him. Paul's life as a preacher and his role now as the grandfather of Pentecostalism in the community have been the result of God's grace and power. While he studies the Bible with devotion, he has never attended a Bible school or received any formal theological training: his relationship with the Holy Spirit is a direct one. His vocation as a preacher of the Word is the result of a powerful dream, and Paul maintain his direct relationship with the Holy Spirit through his prayers and through his experience of the sacred through dreams, visions, and the gifts of God. Paul acknowledges that all he is, and all that he has done has been due to the blessings of the Lord.

In Paul's understanding, his life has been a transformation through the mercy of Christ. In this transformation, the past is associated with the old ways of hunting, trapping, traditional Cree beliefs, 'superstitions', and the residential schools. This old life is also associated with paganism, alcoholism, unhappiness, and separation from God. While the Anglican and Catholic Churches are Christian in a general sense, they do not follow, nor teach the true Word of God. The two churches brought many good things to Wabasca-Desmarais, but they did not provide a direct path to the power and redemption of God. A new set of Christian understandings arrived in the community, along with increased road access, in the early 1960's. Paul saw that this new arrival, Pentecostalism, was the true way. Through baptism, and the blessings of God, Paul was able to leave his carnal, alcoholic, and pagan past behind and become "born again" into a new life with a

new identity as a Pentecostal. This new life has been characterised by his relationship with the Holy Spirit, as encountered in dreams and visions, and the gradual development of his understanding of the Word of God and of himself in relation to it. This transformation is understood to have been the result of the blessings of the Lord, and is available to anyone who sincerely turns towards the Pentecostal faith.

From Paul's perspective, everything that is associated with the old, carnal life of the past is at best insignificant, and at worst dangerous. Traditional Cree lifestyles are considered to be backwards, the Anglican and Catholic Churches are misled, and traditional Cree beliefs and ceremonies are aspects of an ancient cult that is antithetical to salvation and essentially serves the devil. This "old cult" of traditionalism is of particular concern to Paul because it seems to be on the rise in the community. Cree ceremonies such as the *wikokewin* are understood to involve the false worship of idols, and the current trend of the community towards supporting and encouraging traditional beliefs, practices, and knowledge bodes ill for the future. Any efficacy of traditional medicine is understood to result entirely from the material benefits of drinking herbal teas. Paul's own father was skilled at making medicinal teas, but Paul understands them to have only secular value just like any medication that might be bought from a pharmacy. True healing power and knowledge is ultimately a gift from God, and traditionalism is not recognised as providing an efficacious path to God.

The new life, renewed and cleansed by the Holy Spirit, is entirely different. The new life of Pentecostalism involves a direct connection with God and a changed understanding and relationship with the world. Within this changed perception, industrial development and salvation are interrelated aspects of the new life. The petroleum and

forestry industries are understood to be a manifestation of the Lord's ever-changing bounty, provided for the benefit of His people. They are gifts from God, and participation in the resource industry therefore involves participation in the gifts of God: the very essence of the Pentecostal experience. Paul's dreams also show a strong relationship between industrial development and Christian salvation. In them, the spirit of the Lord appears and asks Paul to build a wide and glorious highway leading from the community directly to heaven and salvation. Paul sees himself as a foreman, with his congregation as construction workers, building a highway with the Word of God and in this vision the most powerful tool for clearing the land of its trees is understood to be the Bible.

In Paul's understanding Pentecostals are simultaneously involved in the world through participation in its sacred dimensions and separate from it in their avoidance of the carnal life. God is understood to be present in the world and in nature in order to benefit His people. However, the world is also understood to be a sinful and corrupt place in need of the cleansing fire of the Lord's judgement, just as natural fire is needed to burn and renew the boreal forest. Ancestral Cree traditions are understood to be antithetical to salvation, however Paul acknowledges that within them there may also be the seeds of the Lord's word as received in the past through dreams, visions, and gifts of the Spirit.

CHAPTER SIX

Healing and Culture Formation

In the preceding chapters three case studies have been provided. Each has its own context, but all exist within the broader background of Wabasca-Desmarais and northern Alberta. Each case study details the views of a single individual. Each of the three individuals is Cree or Cree Métis and all share a similar background of language and traditional knowledge. However, each of them has formed a very different picture of reality and their relationship to it. Through them, we catch glimpses of very different responses to the industrial development and cultural change that has occurred in the north over the past century. The various 'pictures of reality' reflected in the case studies illustrate the cognitive models of culture, self, and the world that each individual has developed over time. Although the differences between the case studies may seem greater than their similarities, interesting parallels emerge when they are compared. All three individuals have formed their own cognitive models through an active process of trying to understand the dynamics of northern change in terms of personal knowledge, memories, and desires, as well as in terms of the social, economic, intellectual, and spiritual worlds each perceives around them. This is a process of individual cultural formation, and through it each individual is following his own vision of personal healing and development for the community.

In this chapter I will briefly explore the roots of these three visions, their perspectives on tradition, development, and healing and ask why they have formed the way they have, given the underlying interrelationships of history, knowledge, and lived experience in the community. Finally, I will propose a theoretical meta-model, based on

my research with Wabasca-Desmarais, for understanding the process of cultural formation. It is hoped that this meta-model will have broader applications for recognising the importance of cultural screens in the localisation of knowledge in order to form meaningful and functioning cognitive models in a complex world of globalised knowledge and change, of which, Wabasca-Desmarais is definitely a part.

Analysis

Comparative Analysis of Case Studies

As noted in Chapters one and two, I developed the case studies, source texts and expositions around issues of particular relevance to my central thesis: understanding the effects of industrial change upon resources for community health and traditional healing in northern Aboriginal communities. As such, I have also built my comparison of the three case studies around a similar constellation of issues. These include perceptions of tradition and traditional knowledge, perceptions of current industrial change, and attitudes towards health and healing. Following my comparative analysis, I use the insights gained through comparison to highlight the relationships between industry, Pentecostalism, and Traditionalism, and to explore how the personal histories and world views expressed in the narratives are wrapped up within the larger ethno-historical contexts of northern change in Wabasca-Desmarais.

The contrasts between the three case studies are particularly evident in their stances towards Cree tradition and traditional knowledge. Within the community as well, the terrain of tradition and culture is perhaps the most hotly contested. As mentioned earlier, my own research initially received a great deal of resistance from Pentecostals

due to its openly pro-traditionalist stance. More recently, the opening of the new band school, built in the shape of a tepee so as to resound with traditional Cree beliefs and values, has become a flash point for Pentecostal and Traditionalist factions within the community. This factionalism is also a major influence on the status of traditional Cree medicine and healing practices in the community.

For Elmer Ghostkeeper, tradition and traditional knowledge form the dynamic foundation that grounds him in his culture and his identity as a Métis. As a youth, abandoning tradition and traditional knowledge was necessary in order to be actively involved in the resource industry and contemporary Canadian society. For Elmer this involved an abandonment of self and resulted in unhappiness and imbalance between the four aspects of his being (mind, body, emotion, and spirit) that kept him healthy. In returning to his traditions, or revitalising them, Elmer found that they are important resources not only for himself and other Aboriginal people, but that they also have the potential to inform and alter northern industrial practice to make them more sustainable. Elmer's approach to traditional knowledge emphasises that it is a force for both understanding the past and informing the activities of the future. It is still an active, valid, and useful form of knowledge. Of course, the challenge is to get industry to listen, learn, and work together in a spirit of genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities so that traditional knowledge can be affirmed and benefited from.

Tradition and traditional knowledge are also at the very foundation of a Traditionalist's identity and lifestyle, as with Denys Auger. Through living in a traditional way and dedicating himself to Cree knowledge and tradition, taking care of his fire, he has been able to regain and maintain his health and a strong sense of identity by

participating in the cultural and spiritual legacy of his ancestors. Through a genuine participation in tradition, a person can partake in relationships with the land and with the ancestors that can empower and inform one's present understandings and interactions with the world. However, such participation does require dedication and personal sacrifice. Participation in traditional knowledge through lived experience on the land, and through remembering and maintaining Cree oral traditions is the Traditionalist equivalent of Christian participant in the Word of God through the study of the Bible. The unfolding of traditional knowledge can be understood as the unfolding of a sacred text, and as such is a source of profound strength and resilience for those who participate in it. Denys understands this process as critical to the health and healing of Cree people, and of the community of Wabasca-Desmarais. However, he also sees traditional knowledge as a precious resource whose value has largely been forgotten, misunderstood and abandoned by most of Wabasca-Desmarais, although it is now beginning to be remembered and appreciated by some.

In contrast to Denys' Traditionalist perspective, Paul Hunter views Cree tradition and traditional knowledge as superstitious, backwards and dangerously associated with a pagan past that is antithetical to Christian salvation. For Pentecostalism, Cree tradition is a symbol and manifestation of the old, carnal life of sin that must be abandoned and washed away through being born again in the Spirit of the Lord. It is only through the abandonment of such carnal traditions that salvation might be found in the Second Coming. In Paul's own life, he realised that abandoning Cree tradition was essential for his own healing and spiritual progress. The well being of the community as a whole is also understood to be dependent on its Christian salvation, and so anything that distracts

from this should be abandoned in favour of the sanctifying power of the Word made present through the Bible and through being touched by God. These sanctifying traditions of the Bible are what the future of the community should be based on. The phenomenon of young people braiding their hair and returning to traditional Cree ways is seen as one of the greatest dangers to the future of Wabasca-Desmarais and is associated with the dark days that will precede Tribulation and the end of the world. Although Paul's perception of Cree tradition is overwhelmingly antagonistic, he does acknowledge that within the foundations of Cree spiritual tradition there may be some elements of Christian teaching brought directly to righteous individuals from the Holy Spirit through dreams and visions.

These attitudes towards tradition and the past are also linked to perceptions of industrial development and the future. Together, they make up a dialectic of meaningful symbols and functional strategies. For Elmer Ghostkeeper, northern industry is a monumentally powerful force that can neither be avoided nor denied by Aboriginal communities. It is a reality that must be dealt with. Cree participation in the cash economy of Canadian society is well established, and the need for employment and economic development in Wabasca-Desmarais is a very real one. Even if it were possible to return to the way things used to be, this would not necessarily be desirable. However, past industrial development has not adequately recognised the needs and concerns of the Aboriginal communities it affects. In Elmer's understanding, industrial development is necessary and inevitable. However, companies need to adapt a new paradigm of operations in the boreal forest that is based on a sustainable relationship or partnership with communities and the land. With this as the goal, Elmer sees tremendous potential for

blending traditional knowledge or wisdom and industrial development into a single system that will be of lasting benefit to both Aboriginal communities and northern industrial ventures.

Denys Auger's stance toward industry is much more critical, although still not entirely negative. Denys' experiences in the political arena and his work with the Lubicon Lake Cree have made him extremely wary of industry and its intentions. The presence of industry is recognised as the continuation of a colonial legacy of economic extraction that damages the environment and requires the compromise of traditional values and beliefs in the face of new materialist ones. While the economic benefits of industry are attractive, the ecological and cultural costs of that development are great, especially for a community that lacks a strong sense of cultural identity and is easily swept along by the currents of northern change. The benefits of industry are tempting, but so far as the activities of industry undermine the integrity of traditional lifestyles, knowledge, and beliefs, industry remains a dangerous and detrimental force in the community and on the land.

For Paul Hunter, industrial development holds very different values. It is understood as a symbol of progress, of the new life, and even of the providence of God. As such the Pentecostal view of development contrasts greatly with perceptions of Cree tradition. The economic opportunities of industry spring ultimately from the grace of God, while the leaden traditions of the past are corrupted by the devil. The tendency toward materialism and greed in industry is a danger, but if we separate ourselves from these "carnal" aspects then participation in industry is an acknowledgement and affirmation of God's gifts. The dream that lead to Paul's own dedication to God was

couched in symbols of modern development: the construction of a spiritual highway, and the clearing of the boreal forest using the Word of God as a powerful tool made manifest in the Bible. While the presence of industry has resulted in an actual highway leading from Wabasca-Desmarais to a more direct participation in the larger Canadian society, Pentecostalism has led to the development of a spiritual highway leading to a direct participation in the Holy Spirit. In Paul's visions, and in the life of the Pentecostal church, industrial development and salvation are linked symbolically and pragmatically, and both are inconsistent with the maintenance or revitalisation of Cree traditions.

These three sets of views provide a range of perspectives regarding tradition and development. While Paul's Pentecostal view has a sense of history and tradition lent to it through the teachings of the Bible, it is centred on the future, on the Second Coming of Christ, and on the new life provided by God through the Pentecostal faith and the opportunities of northern industry. While Denys' Traditionalist perspective is dedicated to the future well being of the community and the land, it is centred on the past, on Bush Cree ancestral traditions, and the teachings of the grandmothers and grandfathers. While Paul sees Pentecostalism as a departure from the old ways into the arms of the Lord, Denys sees Traditionalism as participation in an ancestral continuum that is enacted and empowered through ceremonies such as the *wikokewin*. Elmer's industrialist perspective lies somewhere between these two and involves a recognition of the value and validity of traditional knowledge, but also a pragmatic realisation of the power and appeal of northern industry. In Elmer's view, in order for either to have a sustainable future, a way must be found to blend the cultures of Cree tradition and industrial capitalism into a

single syncretic partnership that simultaneously validates the past and informs the activities of the future.

Interestingly, when comparing attitudes towards health and healing, many of the differences represented in the case studies between them seem to disappear. In all three perspectives it is clear that healing knowledge and power come ultimately from the divine. Healing is understood as a blessing from the sacred noumenal realm that is received, in large part, due to our relationship with that sacred level. In the Pentecostal case study this is seen in Paul's account of a dream he received in hospital where a spirit of God came to him and showed him that he would make it through a major operation. It is also represented in Paul's assertion that God heals through miracles, through the gifts of the Spirit, and through the faith of His followers. Denys' perspective is illustrated through the visionary dream experience that led to his return to Traditionalism and his own physical and spiritual healing. This occurred through personal sacrifice and a belief in the healing power inherent in the fire, the pipe, the drum, and other healing resources when activated through ceremony as vehicles of communication between ourselves and the sacred and ancestral powers of the *manito*wak. Certainly, in both Traditionalism and Pentecostalism, gifted individuals are understood to be able to participate in the healing power of faith, prayer, and the sacred in order to heal. In Elmer's narrative his attitudes towards health and healing are more muted, but still emphasise the importance of a sacred world view based on a relationships of reciprocity with the divine, and within which the balance between various aspects of oneself and one's environment can be attended to through ritual and sacrifice. The similarities between these three case studies suggest that the gulf between them may not be as great as originally indicated by their

perceptions of tradition and industry. In fact, the similarities seem to suggest the presence of a deep and persistent Cree grammar of health and healing that has remained fairly constant despite significant changes in cultural content, and the adoption of a cultural view antagonistic to traditional Cree values.

While the three case studies are not intended to be representative of either Al-Pac, Traditionalism, or Pentecostalism, the generalisations made from them do seem to provide insights that are quite useful in understanding the community of Wabasca-Desmarais. The similarities and contrasts between them are perhaps best illuminated in their various uses of the concept of fire. Paul Hunter's discussion of fire is placed within the context of his life experiences in the northern bush, but also within a biblical and Christian context. Fire is understood as both mundane and sacred, it is a cleansing and purifying agent of both God and nature. In the forest it burns the old away and allows new life to grow in its place. In the Christian life, the fire of God and the Holy Spirit fills the same roles, and is the manifestation of God's touch. It purifies human souls, burning away what is old and corrupt, leaving new flesh that is pure, healthy, and ready for a new life lived in the image of Christ. Both of these meanings operate simultaneously in Paul's narrative.

For Denys Auger the fire also has both sacred and secular connotations. It is a grandfather, a tangible link to the sacred, a powerful *manitow*, and a necessary ally for healing and survival that must be respected. It is a spiritual and physical force that can be either helpful or harmful depending on how it is used, and to which Denys has a special relationship. Knowledge of fire is both a physical and spiritual necessity for healthy existence in the boreal forest. It is essential to know how to build a fire in order to cook

food, stay warm, make sacred offerings of food and tobacco, and utilise it in ceremony. The idea that many young people are spiritually and culturally lost is often followed by comments regarding their inability to "keep their own fire going". Fire is significant as both a manifestation and a metaphor of life, spirit, and power. As such it is, as in Paul Hunter's narrative, a simultaneously sacred and mundane force. However, unlike Paul, Denys approaches the fire directly as a non-human person, and as an ally that makes a healthy life possible in the North. For Paul, the notion of fire is always understood simply as a tool of God used by Him to cleanse and renew the world, and, in a biblical sense, as a manifestation of His empowering presence.

For Elmer Ghostkeeper, fire takes on a related set of meanings. In his view fire is both a traditional Cree grandfather and a powerful force for shaping the ecosystems of the boreal forest. The use of fire in forest operations provides a subject through which northern forestry and Cree culture can address each other. The effort to understand fire in the boreal forest provides a stage where the two can meet and collaborate in order to form a "partnership" that will be of benefit to all concerned. The forest ecosystems will benefit from more appropriate forestry practices, the forest corporations will benefit from more sustainable operations, and aboriginal communities may benefit from a validation of their culture and tradition. For Elmer, it is, at least in part, through the grandfather spirit of fire that a new relationship based on respect and co-operation can be formed between industry and aboriginal communities in the north. For Elmer too, fire has dual connotations as both a sacred entity and an important ecological resource. All three case studies mention fire in both these contexts, however its actual meaning is determined by its contexts within the individual's larger cognitive model.

Why Pentecostalism?

Perhaps the most intriguing question raised in my research has been the question of Pentecostalism. When I first arrived in Wabasca-Desmarais I was puzzled by the popularity of a fundamentalist Christian church that was openly antagonistic towards Cree culture. The Pentecostal church seemed to be entirely incongruous with, and antagonistic towards the cultural identity and heritage of the community. However, Pentecostalism and other evangelical forms of Christianity have become popular in aboriginal communities across the north and are mentioned in passing in a number of recent works (Warry 1998, Tanner 1998, Waugh 1996, Treat 1996, Zieba 1990, Grant 1984). Although the presence of non-Aboriginal Pentecostal missionaries may have been prevalent in other northern communities, in Wabasca-Desmarais their presence has been quite sporadic. The main force of impetus for Pentecostalism has been an internal one, historically led by Paul Hunter and a small number of other inspired Cree preachers. From the emic perspective of a Pentecostal believer the Pentecostal faith is popular because it is the true way to God. Those who follow it tend to see themselves as having been personally chosen for the path. Often a powerful dream or life event (as in Paul Hunter's narrative) serves as a transformational experience that propels the individual in the direction of the Pentecostal faith. However, the popularity of the Pentecostal church in Wabasca-Desmarais can also be approached from a more etic perspective. When this is attempted, a much more complicated web of interrelated historical, institutional, and idiosyncratic factors seem to be involved. Perhaps most critical has been the creatively syncretic way that all of these influences have been brought together, or localised, within

the cognitive models of individuals within Wabasca-Desmarais in order to make an attractive and persuasive cultural whole: Cree Pentecostalism.

The late 1950's and early 1960's were a watershed for change in the community of Wabasca-Desmarais. Pentecostalism was first established in the community in the early 1960's, shortly after permanent roads into the area were built to improve access for industrial development. From a historical perspective there seems to be a direct relationship between the rise of Pentecostalism and the rise of industry in the area. There also seems to be a direct relationship between the rise of Pentecostalism and an increase in tolerance towards Cree cultural traditions in the Anglican and Catholic churches as marked by the closure of the Church run residential schools. While the presence of improved road access to the area was certainly a major factor in the introduction of Pentecostalism to the community, it does not explain why the fundamentalist views of Pentecostalism found such an appreciative audience in its Cree listeners.

For over fifty years the Church run residential schools of Wabasca-Desmarais actively tried to replace Cree language, culture, and beliefs with Euro-Canadian equivalents through the denigration of Aboriginal tradition. In the 1960's this policy shifted, but in its wake were left three generations of Cree who had been taught by the non-Cree authority figures of the community that Cree culture and traditions were backwards, primitive and worthless. The colonial legacy of the residential school system acculturated a significant number of young people in the community with the idea that being Cree was somehow wrong. As Denys Auger notes in his narrative, "we have people who were taught as children that their parents' beliefs were evil and whose attitudes toward our traditions are still dominated by fear and suspicion..." (Auger 1997: 1). This

legacy of the residential schools led not only to a variety of social problems including alcoholism, family violence, and suicide, but also led to the creation of a latent animosity towards Cree tradition and culture *within* the community. When, in the 1960's, the residential schools closed and the Anglican and Catholic churches began to tolerate and even support Cree traditions, a new outlet for the internal animosities towards Cree tradition had to be found.

As noted in the narratives of Elmer Ghostkeeper and Denys Auger, there was the added problem of the dissonance that occurs between the traditional Cree values of living *with* the land, and the values of living *off* the land required for success in the resource extraction industries (Ghostkeeper 1996). Viewing the land in terms of a direct relationship between humans and sacred *manitowak* required respect and an attention to important relationships based on reciprocity. Success in the newly established wage economy of northern industry was largely dependent on a view of the land as an inanimate object that could be mined or cut in order to make money and accumulate wealth. With the increased availability of wage employment provided by the resource industries, and improved access to Euro-Canadian commodities such as trucks, store bought foods, and alcohol provided via the new roads, the cash economy of industry was both prestigious and appealing. However, by the 1960's the cognitive dissonance created by involvement in the cash economy was not helped much by the philosophical alternatives presented by Anglican and Catholic churches. They were already moving towards a syncretism between traditional beliefs and Church doctrine, following the lead of Roger Vandersteene (see Waugh 1996).

Given these historical contexts, the popularity of Pentecostalism in the community is not so surprising. Through the ceremony of baptism and the powerful experience of being "born-again" and cleansed by the Spirit of the Lord, Pentecostalism provides a symbolic separation from an undesirable past and allows old patterns to be abandoned and denigrated in support of a new identity. Where the residential schools taught that being Cree was wrong and dirty, Pentecostalism allows the opportunity to stop seeing oneself as Cree and to instead be born-again into a new life as a Christian, part of a new and blessed community of Pentecostalism. At the same time, the Pentecostal faith allows full participation in the cash based economy of the dominant Euro-Canadian society without a clash of values. Traditional Cree relationships with the sacred through the land, the animals, and the ancestors are replaced with a direct relationship to God, omitting nature as a necessary intermediary. Rather than creating dissonance, the association of the new Christian life with industrial development actually allows the affirmation of one's relationship to God through wage employment and success in the resource industries. As well, the ecstatic, charismatic and joyous tent meetings of Pentecostalism are enjoyable. As noted in chapter two, the music and emotional performances that characterise them are commonly understood as "parties for Jesus". They provide entertainment, an opportunity to socialise and participate publicly in prayer, and an opportunity to release emotional stress within a socially sanctioned environment through emotional performance and ecstatic release.

Interestingly, despite the appeal that Pentecostalism may have as an explicitly anti-traditionalist belief system, in many ways it is not nearly as radical a departure from traditional Cree religious forms as it first appears to be. In fact, it is in many ways more

similar to traditional Cree systems of religion than either Catholicism or Anglicanism. These hidden congruencies may well be an even larger factor in its popularity than its overt philosophical stance. As noted by Zieba (1990) Pentecostal preachers are in many ways the functional equivalents of traditional healers in that they tend to be charismatic, form a direct relationship with the divine through altered states of consciousness, and are able to heal the sick through healing power derived from God. The importance of prophetic dreams, the performance of 'miracles' through prayer, the speaking of prophecy and the pervasive influences of spirits and spiritual powers (both good and evil) are enthusiastically recognised by the Pentecostal church. Stated somewhat differently, despite the overtly antagonistic stance of Pentecostalism towards tradition, it embraces many of the formal aspects of traditional religion familiar to the community, but under the rubric of Christianity and the Word of God. Although the characterisation may be offensive to some Christians, Pentecostalism seems to be a modern form of traditional shamanism that has built upon the underlying Cree grammars of healing and spirituality in the community, while simultaneously allowing the denigration of them through the formation of a separate Pentecostal identity.

These similarities between Traditionalism and Pentecostalism are further amplified when it is remembered that Traditionalism in Wabasca-Desmarais is really a thorough syncretism of Cree tradition, Anglicanism and Catholicism. An etic evaluation of Pentecostalism seems to indicate that it too is in some ways a result of religious syncretism. This is further indicated by Paul Hunter's statement that in following the instructions of the spirit that empowered him with the mandate of entrenching the Word of God in the community, he does not ask for money in his services. This ethic is in stark

contrast to the practice of other Pentecostal preachers, many of whom are infamous for the money they have made from preaching the Word of God. However, Paul's vision and its imposition of a taboo is very much in tune with the traditional Cree ethic that prohibits a traditional Cree healer from charging for his or her services. The persistence of underlying traditional grammars within the Pentecostal community is further indicated by the fact that it is generally reported by healers and traditional practitioners in Wabasca-Desmarais, including Denys Auger, that many Pentecostals continue to secretly see them for medicine, and even participate in traditional religious forms in times of crisis.

Considering these various factors, Pentecostalism's popularity in Wabasca-Desmarais is not so puzzling. Pentecostalism in Wabasca-Desmarais has been a reaction to a perceived need for a new religious paradigm that could focus the latent antagonism towards Cree traditions left by the decline of the residential schools, and that could resolve the cognitive dissonance between Cree tradition and involvement in resource extraction industries. While Pentecostalism speaks out against the persistence of traditional Cree beliefs, it also provides a religious view that is in tune with many of them. Pentecostalism is popular in Wabasca-Desmarais because it allows people to participate fully in current economic opportunities within a religious form that heralds a new life through abandoning the problems of the old. Perhaps most importantly, Pentecostalism does this in a way that remains familiar to Cree participants because its underlying grammars are fundamentally congruent with traditional Cree religious grammars. Paul Hunter's narrative makes it evident that the rise of Pentecostalism is in fact a revitalisation movement (Wallace 1970) that has occurred from within the community. Accounts of Paul's life in his narrative reflect that he experienced periods of

increased personal stress (his youth and alcoholism) and cultural disintigration (his suicide attempt) prior to receiving the dream that empowered him to spread Pentecostalism, his "new code", in the community.

Synthesis: knowledge and the formation of culture

Several times during Paul Hunter's narrative, when referring to the cognitive model of culture that he has been able to form through the combination of Pentecostalism within his personal experiences of Cree tradition and northern change, he exclaims, "It's a marvellous, marvellous picture…". In all of the case studies, each individual has developed a distinct cognitive model of the world through an active process of knitting together both pragmatic and aesthetic factors into a cultural system that is both meaningful and functional within the contemporary contexts of Wabasca-Desmarais. The factors involved in building these cognitive models include economic, social and political concerns, but also involve paying attention to the essentially aesthetic concerns of forming a system of meaning that exhibits such qualities as internal coherence and congruence with past cultural forms. It is through the development and maintenance of such "marvellous pictures" of the world that individuals are able to build strong and resilient identities out of the flux of northern change and the complexity of influences found in northern communities. It seems that such identities may be founded in the revitalisation of tradition, as in the case of Denys Auger, the blending of traditional and industrial values, as in the case of Elmer Ghostkeeper, or even in a creatively formed rejection of tradition, as in the case of Paul Hunter.

The ongoing formation of cultures in Wabasca-Desmarais and elsewhere is an innate human propensity that enables us to adapt to and engage changing environments and cultural situations. Each of us is continuously receiving a barrage of information from various media, networks of social interaction, and idiosyncratic experiences. We evaluate this information, much of it subconsciously, for any pragmatic or aesthetic value that it might have for us.

This process of evaluation occurs through a psychological or cultural screen made up of values, ideas, and concepts that are themselves subject to a process of continuous adaptation and reconfiguration. These screens are "interposed between presentation and acceptance" (Wallace 1970: 172) and through them we critically evaluate and filter out those features of our larger realities that are incompatible with our identity or the identities of our community. This process of evaluating, selecting, and incorporating information from our various worlds is critical to the formation of our cognitive models, and the formation of culture. As illustrated in the above case studies and comparative analysis, both pragmatic and aesthetic considerations are central to cultural formation and the development of strong cognitive models. This simultaneously pragmatic and aesthetic process of screening information and forming effective and meaningful worlds is what I will refer to here as localisation[1].

The repositioning of aesthetics as central to human cognitive and cultural development may seem strange. However, as Tracey Spack and I have outlined in a recent article,

[1] The term localisation is generally used as a counterpoint to the idea of globalisation, and this implication is intended here where globalisation is to localisation as communication is to understanding.

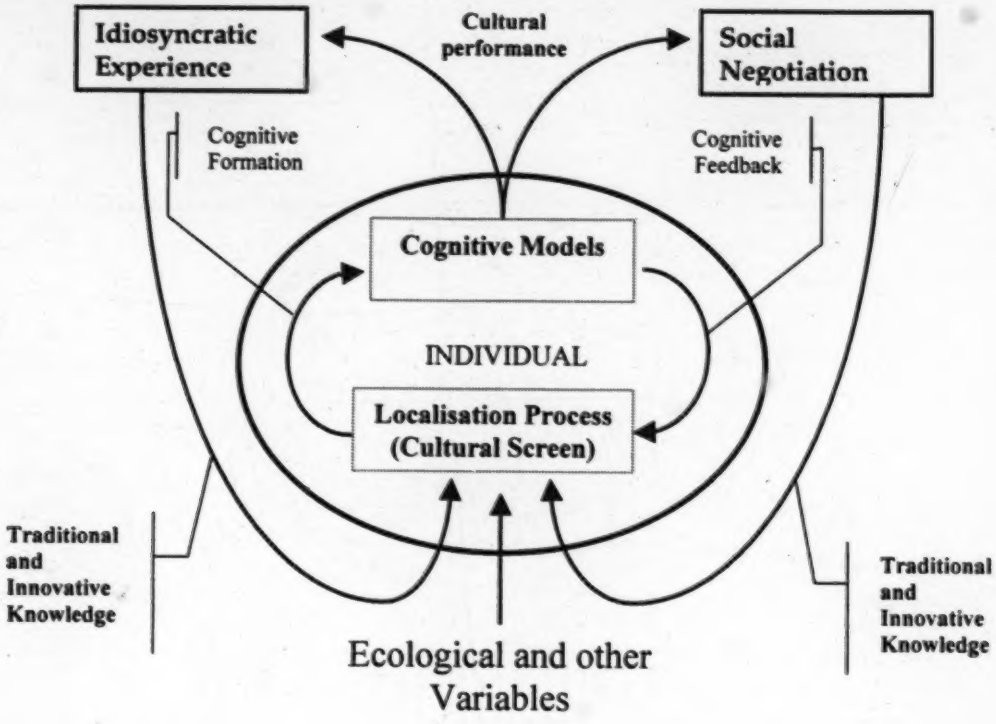
> ...the formation of our cognitive models, and by analogy, the formation of our cultures, is not only a passive process of enculturation, but also an active and creative endeavor profoundly influenced by aesthetic evaluations ...whereby meaning and experience are remembered and reconfigured using the aesthetic sense to shape the cognitive worlds within which we live (Candler and Spack 1998: in press).

The concept of localisation does not, however, ignore the fact that we are biological organisms that exist in dynamic and often adverse political, economic, social and ecological circumstances. Pragmatics and aesthetics cannot be neatly separated as they form interpenetrating evaluations of function and meaning.

As already mentioned, it is evident that as humans we consider both practical and aesthetic concerns, often simultaneously and instinctively, when we select and then incorporate ideas, images or practices into our cognitive and cultural worlds. Only a small amount of the sensory information available to us is actually selected for inclusion in our worldviews. We learn about the world through either our direct experience of the world (idiosyncratic knowledge), or through what others tell us about the world (social knowledge). Either kind of knowledge can be traditional or innovative in nature, and possibly both. Knowledge is traditional insofar as it supports or augments existing patterns and views, and innovative insofar as it challenges them with new forms (see figure 4).

In many ways this process of localisation is related to the patterns of acceptance, use, and rejection of new ideas outlined in Wallace's notion of mazeway resynthesis (1970), and Homer Barnett's earlier work on innovation (1953). The localisation of cultural or experiential knowledge differs from simple incorporation or acceptance because ideas, images and practices are not only evaluated and selected, but are often

Figure 4: Meta-model of Localisation and Culture Formation



creatively altered, elaborated and reconfigured in order to better fit them into pre-existing systems of understanding. At the individual level localisation refers to the process of forming, expanding or adjusting cognitive models. However, the term also operates at a more macroscopic level referring to the localisation of new practices or ideas within communities and larger cultural institutions. As such, the process of adopting a new religious concept within one's preexisting grammars of sacred cosmology is a process of localisation, as would the more macroscopic adoption of a new technology within a community's already established subsistence practices. In any case, localisation seems to follow the same essential pattern whether it takes place at microscopic or macroscopic

levels. It is an active and dynamic process involving the evaluation, selection and adaptation of information within pre-existing frameworks according to various criteria including aesthetic and pragmatic ones. This creative localisation of information, ideas, and concepts subjects them to evaluation and reevaluation, incorporating and weaving them into our worlds by establishing cognitive relationships within pre-existing patterns until satisfactory depths of integration and refinement are achieved.

As noted by Hannerz (1991), at some level, and with varying degrees of power (symmetry), all individuals take part in the 'network of networks' that is the global system or ecumene, both receiving and contributing to the flow of information and culture that passes through it. The individual receives a flow of information, both meaningful and meaningless, from this macro-network of the global ecumene through his or her micro-networks of media and social interaction. It is within these networks of interaction that individuals construct their own social being and identity. This information plays a major role in affecting, both consciously and subconsciously, the way we construct our cognitive models of the world. Where we have access to a strong base of traditional knowledge, we are more likely to be able to build cognitive models of the world that express congruence, coherence, and depth.

New knowledge and experiences are responded to in a number of ways. Hannerz (1991) outlines three general tendencies and describes them as encapsulation, segregativity, and integrativity. These tendencies are simply methods of managing or coping with new meanings. Encapsulation refers to the rejection or avoidance of a new meaning in favour of homogeneity, segregativity refers to the acceptance of meaning within some aspects of one's mazeway while keeping others relatively unaffected, and

integrativity refers to the integration of new meaning throughout one's mazeway. Using the Wabasca-Desmarais data, Denys Auger's approach can be seen to be relatively encapsulative, Elmer Ghostkeeper's is more segregative, and Paul Hunter's is relatively integrative. Regardless, all three have formed their respective cognitive models from the localisation of the knowledge and experiences available to them, and in an effort to establish a view of the world that is both aesthetically meaningful and pragmatically useful. In all three cases, the result is a cognitive model of the world that incorporates and responds to the innovative influences of northern development and change within a context of traditional knowledge, or in the case of Pentecostalism, traditional grammars.

While the forces of cultural assimilation and change, embodied in new knowledge, opportunities and power relationships, challenge the cognised environments of the individuals and the culture of the community, the influences of tradition and traditional knowledge support them. Each individual responds to these influences and challenges and takes action to either ignore, adapt to, or control them. Responses might include the creative alteration of one's cognitive model, it may involve attempting to regulate the causes of change through using political power or coercive force to isolate or avoid disturbing elements, or it may involve changing one's networks of social interaction to avoid the issue. In cases of extreme or forced culture change individuals may not be able to maintain healthy cognitive models in the face of rapid innovative pressures, thereby leading to the erosion of resources of tradition and traditional knowledge, and an attendant increase in anxiety and stress. In chronic cases this increased level of anxiety and stress may lead to increased levels of social and

physiological illness and disease as the repercussions of rapid culture loss take their physiological, psychological, social, and spiritual tolls.

As individuals, we form our own cultures and cognitive models through the creative selection of aesthetic meaning and the evaluation of pragmatic function. This selection of meaning and function occurs within contexts of dynamic interrelationships between networks of social knowledge and individual experience of an often difficult world. Both social networks and individual experience are essential resources of knowledge in the formation of healthy cognitive models and healthy cultures. The formation of an individual's culture or cognitive model is an ongoing process in which resources of traditional and innovative knowledge are blended, combined, and recombined in response to experience. The resulting systems of understanding are then tested in the world through cultural performance and the resulting feedback derived from subsequent social and idiosyncratic experience. The end goal of this process is the creation and maintenance of a strong and healthy understanding of the world that is both fulfilling and rewarding, and which is hopefully reinforced by a supportive and successfully negotiated network of relationships and institutions. This is an essential process in the formation of healthy cultures and healthy communities, and the resource of traditional knowledge is vital to it.

Through this process of localisation we test and evaluate our experiences and our knowledge to form effective and adaptable cultural models. Given a relatively stable environment and a strong bases in traditional knowledge the process of continuously localising and re-localising information and feedback through culture, experience, and

consciousness might result in individuals developing cognitive models of such refined integration that they resemble what in 1924 Sapir called genuine culture:

> The genuine culture is…inherently harmonious, balanced, self-satisfactory. It is the expression of a richly varied and yet somehow unified and consistent attitude toward life, an attitude which sees the significance of any one element of civilization in its relation to all others. It is, ideally speaking, a culture in which nothing is spiritually meaningless, in which no important part of the general functioning brings with it a sense of frustration, of misdirected or unsympathetic effort. (Sapir 1924: 314-315)

In a world of increasingly globalised information and ideology, and increasingly rapid change, it is through the localisation process that individuals and communities attempt to maintain, reinforce, and expand their own worlds. Localisation may be successful to varying degrees, but it embodies a fundamentally dialogic processes of negotiating experience and culture in order to form cognitive models of the world that maintain both function and meaning within the complexities of our everyday lives and experiences. As such, our aesthetic and pragmatic evaluation of innovative and traditional knowledge and influences, encapsulated within the process of localisation, bears directly upon how we form and understand our cultures and our identities. As such, the concept of localisation not only informs our understanding of Wabasca-Desmarais, but also informs numerous contemporary issues in anthropological theory including globalisation, the development of new cultural forms, culture change and syncretism as well as critical issues in applied anthropology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Full Circle

I began my research with Wabasca-Desmarais with a concern about the effects of industry upon the material resources for traditional healing including medicinal plants. As noted in chapter two, I ended up concerned with a much broader range of community resources, including intangible and knowledge-based ones. This process led me away from my emphasis on the effects of northern industrial change and resulted in an exploration of northern religious change and culture formation in Wabasca-Desmarais. Interestingly, this exploration of religious change now returns, full circle, to the role of northern industrial development in ideological change affecting the resources necessary for community health and healing.

In northern Aboriginal communities such as Wabasca-Desmarais, traditional culture encodes resources of knowledge that are vital to the health of both communities and individuals. Industrial change does affect the material resources required for traditional Cree medicine including plants and animals. However, it is clear from my research that it also affects the less tangible resources of traditional Cree knowledge, as well as the human resources of traditional Cree healing. Perhaps the only realm of traditional Cree healing that industry does not directly affect is that of the sacred *manitowak*, but even here industrial development has its implications (see below).

As noted above, northern industrial development has played a key role in the rise of Cree Pentecostalism in the community. In stating this, I do not mean that industry intentionally or consciously introduced or supported a belief system antagonistic to Cree traditional knowledge in the community. The Canadian government, in collaboration with

the Catholic and Anglican churches may have been guilty of that in the first half of the century, but I do not think that northern industry is in the later half. The impacts of industry seem to be due simply to massive collateral damages accumulated as a result of rapid industrial development within a capitalist and materialist framework. To use a bio-medical metaphor, the erosion of traditional Cree values and institutions of cultural transmission is a side-effect of northern industrial development.

Northern industry cannot, however, be seen as a culturally neutral force. It supports and is embedded within a culture of capitalist materialism based on legal contracts and property titles that exists in stark opposition to traditional Cree systems of generalised reciprocity that are based on mutual respect and responsibility. Northern industry tends to be founded upon anthropocentric, secular, and mechanistic views of nature and the world where humanity is seen as having a right to exploit, manufacture and dominate an objectified and de-personified environment for its own gain. Furthermore, industry communicates and perpetuates these values through the workplace, reinforcing them in its employees as they take part in industrial activity, and implicitly rendering traditional values mute or invalid. Although industry has not intended to destroy aboriginal traditions and cultures, the cumulative effect of its powerful presence, combined with the historical legacies of other forms of Canadian colonialism is undeniable.

While walking through the boreal forest, it is inevitable that we crush small grasses, mosses, herbs, and insects under our clumsy feet, snapping twigs and pulverising tiny creatures. The problem is that trans-national resource extraction corporations such as Al-Pac and the Mitsubishi Corporation are almost inconceivably immense

conglomerations of capital accumulation and economic power, greater than the tallest forest giants, and their footprints in the boreal forest are correspondingly immense. Without great care, the grasses and herbs that are crushed by the footprints of their industrial activities include entire communities and cultures, as well as local ecosystems and established economies. Thomas Berger states that,

> ...the real danger of such projects lies not so much in their continued failure to provide ongoing jobs for native people, but rather in the highly intrusive effects such projects may have on native society and the native economy, including among other things the failure to recognise and strengthen...the native economy and its associated values and preferences so that its very foundations are not undermined...(Berger 179-180: 1986)

Project Recommendations

If achieving sustainable development involves considering the health of all of the systems associated with development then we must consider the entire length and breadth of industrial impact in the boreal forest and its effects on the health of local systems of ecology, community, culture, and economics. The objectives of this thesis, as set out in chapter one, are not so grand. I set out to understand the effects of industrial development on community health in general and traditional Cree healing and medicine in particular. I have already outlined in some detail the challenges that Pentecostalism brings to the community and the role industry plays in its popularity. I have also given some consideration to the role of traditional knowledge in the formation of healthy and effective cultural models through the process of localisation. What remains is to consider the impacts of northern development in terms of the four types of traditional healing resources outlined in chapter two and suggest possible strategies for mitigating impact to these cultural resources.

My initial fieldwork in Wabasca-Desmarais illustrated that there are four general kinds of resources that are necessary for traditional health and healing. These include medicinal plants and animals (natural resources), but also, and perhaps more importantly, include traditional knowledge (intellectual resources), people (human resources), and resources of the spirit (spiritual resources). Of these it is the resource of traditional knowledge that seems to be under the greatest pressure, and that is, perhaps, the most valuable both within the community and for the sustainability of other institutions in the boreal forest. Industry has unique impacts upon each of these general kinds of resources. Despite the fact that many of these impacts are upon resources that are relatively abstract and intangible, there are strategies that seem likely to be able to mitigate the effects of northern industry upon them. The strategies that I propose for these mitigative steps have been developed from my research and from my evaluations of Al-Pac's initiatives in Wabasca-Desmarais. They are also informed by informal evaluations of these initiatives that I heard from community members during my research. Mitigative measures taken to protect the knowledge-based cultural resources of a northern community not only benefit the community through ensuring the persistence of traditional knowledge and strengthening cultural identity, but, in the long term, they also benefit the sustainability of industry in the North (see Young and Candler 1998).

Mitigative strategies such as those suggested here must always be initiated with and based in community support. Initiatives that come from within the community are much more likely to succeed than ones that are introduced from the outside, no matter how well-meaning the outsider's intentions. The imposition of mitigative steps that do

not have widespread community support and involvement simply perpetuates a destructive colonial relationship with northern communities. Such initiatives also ignore the fact that the healing of many northern communities needs to come largely from within, no matter where the original damage came from. Industry should recognise that its operations often create or exacerbate internal conflicts within communities. Where this is the case, as in Wabasca-Desmarais, the first step to addressing such impact should be to support attempts made by groups within the community to overcome community factionalism through providing opportunities for open dialogue, or through other means. Such a policy of support may then encourage the community to build a decision making body that could oversee and initiate other projects aimed at supporting traditional knowledge and encouraging community health. The recommendations below are suggestions for what such mitigative projects might look like.

Natural Resources

The natural resources for traditional healing that are impacted by industrial development include medicinal plants and animals, as well as culturally important sites such as ceremonial areas, burial sites, and other areas where traditional activities commonly occur. Interviews with traditional healers in Wabasca-Desmarais indicate that many of the herbs, and some of the animals that are used in traditional medicine are becoming increasingly difficult to locate. While many of the herbs that are destroyed during the clear cut of the boreal forest do grow back within several seasons after industrial disturbance, a number of other species grow only under very particular ecological circumstances or only within very mature stands of trees. Mature stands of

mixed wood are also required for traditional ceremonies such as the *wikokewin*. The lodge within which this ceremony is conducted is constructed of aspen, spruce, birch, and willow poles that must be of sufficient age and strength for building the structure, and which must be cut by hand from the area surrounding the site of the lodge.

Al-Pac's funding of traditional use studies using GIS and GPS technologies mentioned in Elmer Ghostkeeper's account is a step in the right direction for avoiding and mitigating impact to archaeological and traditional use sites. However, this high tech approach has a number of shortcomings at the community level. Since the 1970's, GPS and GIS technologies have become the premier tools for collecting and documenting geographical information. However, as researchers with the long standing Makivik project of the Nunavik Inuit note:

> [m]erely 'collecting' and 'documenting' indigenous environmental knowledge is in fact counter-productive. These knowledge systems have been under serious attack for centuries, and the social systems that support them have been seriously undermined....It is not just a question of recovery and recording indigenous knowledge; it is one of respect and revitalization. (Kemp and Brooke 1995: 27)

As I have noted elsewhere (Candler 1997), the use of GIS and GPS technologies tends to involve the decontextualisation of local knowledge within a foreign and high-tech system of meaning. This decontextualisation often results in a loss of community control, access, and input, a general loss of dynamism and adaptability of the knowledge and a reinforcement of social divisions within small community contexts. Due to the difficulties involved in the use of GIS and GPS systems, and the sensitivity of specific information regarding Cree traditional medicine, it is recommended that a more general mitigative approach be taken to protecting the material resources of traditional medicine. It is recommended that industry work with the community of Wabasca-Desmarais to maintain

a number of areas free of industrial development for the collection and preservation of medicinal plant and animal species, as well as for activities associated with traditional Cree activities and the transmission of traditional knowledge (see below). These areas should be representative of the various ecological zones of the boreal forest, and should be of sufficient size and ease of access to meet the needs of the community for traditional medicines and support its continuance into the future. Wherever possible these areas should be centred around concentrations of traditional use sites, or within areas that are of particular historical and cultural significance to the Bigstone Cree.

Intellectual Resources

The protection of the intellectual or knowledge-based resources necessary for Cree traditional healing is somewhat more problematic. Only a few members of the community hold knowledge regarding the rarer medicinal plants and animals, and the complex recipes that they are often a part of. The sacred nature of this medicinal knowledge means that it is kept a closely guarded secret that is generally passed on only through close kinship and social ties. Where industry and industry supported values erode this transmission of knowledge, measures should be taken to reinforce or support these relationships. For example, industry should consider providing funds for community initiated encounters between elders and youth, perhaps taking place in the bush in the form of a camp or mentorship, in order to facilitate the transmission of traditional knowledge, including medicinal and ceremonial knowledge, to younger generations.

While such sensitive knowledge may not be suitable for publication or widespread communication, documentation of it may be possible if the mechanisms of

documentation remain entirely within the sphere of control of individual families or individuals within the community. In conjunction with local Wabasca-Desmarais schools it is possible that an initiative based on the Seedkeeper programs of India (Shiva 1997) might be successful in northern Alberta. Through such a project families are encouraged to write down their own medicinal and plant knowledge in a family or community book in order to encourage discussion of the knowledge within the family and in order to ensure that such knowledge is not lost. The intention is not to publish the information, but to create a permanent record of traditional knowledge for the community's own use. This also provides a way of protecting the intellectual property of families or communities from outside pressures by ensuring that ownership of the traditional knowledge, and copyright over it remains within the community rather than with outside institutions or corporations.

It is recommended that industry also commit itself to supporting initiatives to preserve and support the local dialect of Cree in the community, as this is the preferred language of transmission for traditional knowledge of all kinds. This may include providing financial assistance for Cree language and culture programs in local schools. It might also involve supporting the Cree language in the workplace, or through publication of Cree literature or teaching materials. Industry might also encourage and provide support for occasions that feature the telling of oral histories and traditional stories: occasions for a celebration of northern Cree language and culture and occasions for youth, elders, and other members of the community to interact.

Human Resources

As evident in the split between Pentecostalism and Traditionalism in the community, the social or human resources of traditional healing have also been impacted by industrial activity. Through supporting initiatives that facilitate the transmission of traditional knowledge in the community the benefits of an improved cultural identity will likely be felt throughout the community. However, such initiatives also risk the alienation of the Pentecostals in the community. For this reason it is important that efforts to repair the split between Traditionalism and Pentecostalism be supported. Already, the Bigstone Cree Education Authority has sponsored a series of elder's gatherings aimed at improving dialogue within the community. One of these gatherings was aimed specifically at trying to mend the factionalism in the community that occurs between the various religious denominations. With some support, this process of reconciliation will likely continue, and the texts from Denys Auger and Paul Hunter both seem to hold room for the development of common ground between them.

Industry should also consider supporting initiatives that support the role of traditionalists and elders in the community and elsewhere. Through recognising traditional skills, expertise, knowledge, and values within contemporary industrial operations, traditional roles and understanding are made increasingly relevant and important to contemporary northern life. Al-Pac's initiatives to employ skilled traditionalists as consultants and cultural educators provide an example of this that seems to work. Through recognising and supporting traditionalists and traditional knowledge, and placing it in prominent positions of esteem, the roles, values, and sets of knowledge that are vital to Traditionalism are reaffirmed. This not only increases the individual's

exposure to traditional knowledge, but it also improves the esteem of Traditionalism, as it is valued within the contemporary economic systems of northern life. When the position of Cree culture or Traditionalism is genuinely respected and given prominence in the work place, rather than co-opting it for public relations purposes, the erosional pressures of industry's secular and mechanistic environment are reduced.

Spiritual Resources

As traditional Cree understandings of the sacred are inevitably related to material conditions, the spiritual resources of traditional healing are also subject to direct and indirect impact from northern industry. According to Denys Auger, it is imperative that a ceremonial healing lodge be built in a place that is "clean". Pollution or frequent trespass diminishes the spiritual strength of a place, and busy roads and other industrial impacts can keep one's grandmothers and grandfathers, the *manitowak*, from "coming near" or participating in a ceremonial activity. Most damaging of all to sacred resources are high-voltage power lines as their radiant electricity interferes with ceremonial energies. As a result, areas near power lines are avoided when choosing a location for a lodge. These sensitivities should be taken into account when development occurs near an area that is known to be used for traditional healing purposes, or that is known to hold particular spiritual significance.

Summary and Conclusions

In northern Aboriginal communities traditional culture encodes resources of traditional knowledge that are vital to the health of both communities and individuals. The rapid changes affecting many northern areas are endangering the transmission, and

hence the survival, of traditional knowledge resources. My work with Wabasca-Desmarais has emphasised that the resources critical to the persistence of traditional healing in the community include medicinal plants and animals (natural resources), traditional medicinal knowledge (intellectual resources), people (human or social resources), and resources of the spirit (spiritual resources). These resources are of value not only to the health of northern Aboriginal communities and individuals, but also to any parties interested in reducing the impact, or improving the sustainability and long term yield of industry in northern areas.

In Wabasca-Desmarais, these resources are challenged largely by a combination of internal pressures from the local Pentecostal movement, and external pressures from northern industry, controlled by powerful multinational corporations such as Al-Pac and the Mitsubishi Corporation. These pressures are the most recent manifestation of a century of massive social, political, economic, and cultural changes in the North that has resulted in a host of local problems including alcoholism, community factionalism, family violence, infectious disease and suicide. The processes of northern change have also resulted in the participation of Wabasca-Desmarais within the larger national and international economies with its attendant involvement in global systems of commodity exchange and increased access to global networks of information and influence.

Within the context of these internal and external pressures, individuals within the community of Wabasca-Desmarais still rely on a substrate of traditional Cree knowledge to form effective and resilient cognitive models of the world from life experiences and information available to them through local and non-local sources. The processes of cultural formation that led to the cultural views expressed in the case studies presented in

chapters three, four and five involve the localisation of individual experience and social knowledge using a continuously adjusting cultural screen assembled from a combination of traditional and innovative influences. Where this screen is effective at controlling the rate of incoming information, cognitive models can be assembled that provide both aesthetic meaning and pragmatic function. The transmission of traditional knowledge plays a vital role in the formation of effective or healthy cultural systems. Traditional knowledge is essential to the active and creative process of cultural formation, from which healthy cultures and healthy communities spring. Even the popularity of Pentecostalism, which is vocal in its opposition to Cree Traditionalism, can be understood as a reaction to historical changes and industrial opportunity that rejects Cree tradition while simultaneously affirming and reflecting it in its underlying cultural grammars.

In conclusion, traditional knowledge itself needs to be recognised as a cultural resource critical to the health and well-being of northern communities, and vulnerable to developmental change. Not only does it encode important ecological, medicinal, ethical and spiritual insights, but it also provides a critical foundation for strong and resilient models of the world that enable a sense of cultural identity and social cohesion that is, in a very real way, healing. Both Denys Auger and Elmer Ghostkeeper base their understandings largely within the contexts of Cree traditional knowledge. Paul Hunter bases his understandings within the Biblical tradition of Christianity, but is still strongly influenced by Cree traditional knowledge.

With traditional knowledge and traditional medicine recognised as critical resource for the health of individuals and communities, the effects of industry upon these

resources must be taken into account when determining sustainability. While industry does not overtly oppose traditional knowledge, and in some cases actively endorses it, its simultaneous erosional effects upon Cree traditional knowledge and culture are often unacknowledged. If healthy and strong local communities are to be achieved or maintained in the boreal forest, then industry must recognise its impacts upon the transmission of traditional knowledge, and upon the persistence of traditional healing resources. By recognising its relationship to the boreal forest and boreal forest communities, northern industry can avoid conflict in the forest, but may also be able to contribute to rather than erode the health of the boreal forest and of Wabasca-Desmarais in the future.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Interview Number: Date:

Biography

Age:

Sex:

Treaty Status:

What is the highest level or grade of school you've achieved?

What was your first language?

What other languages, if any, do you speak?

What religion, if any, do you follow (more than one religion, including Traditional religion, may be noted)?

Interview Number: Date:

Opinions

1) What sorts of things make for a healthy community?

2) What sorts of things make for an unhealthy community?

3) What do you think are some of the major factors affecting the health of a community like Wabasca-Desmerais?

4) What sorts of things make for a healthy individual?

5) What sorts of things make for an unhealthy individual?

6) What do you think are some of the major factors affecting the health of individuals in Wabasca-Desmerais?

7) Do you think there is a relationship between the health of a community and the health of an individual living in that same community? If so, then what is the relationship?

8) Do you think there is a relationship between health and traditional culture? If so, then what is the relationship?

9) How do logging and other resource industries affect the health of Native communities like Wabasca-Desmerais?

10) What can be done to help ensure that resource industry practices (logging, oil and gas, etc.) enhance rather than harm the health of Native communities and their members?

11) What can be done to help ensure that logging practices enhance rather than harm aspects of traditional culture such as traditional medicine?

12) Do you think logging companies might want to help maintain the health or cultural traditions of Native communities? Why or why not?

13) How important do you think traditional culture is to the health of communities and individuals?

14) Do you think traditional medicine has a role to play in maintaining the health of communities and individuals?

Interview Number: Date:

Beliefs

1) For you, what is culture or tradition?

2) For you, what is religion? Is religion important in your life? If so, then in what way is it important?

3) Do you think religion is an important force in the community? If so, then how so?

4) What people, or what sorts of things have been major influences on your personal beliefs (church, school, grandparents, etc.)?

5) Do you think there are any major threats or challenges to the survival of traditional culture and traditional medicine in the community? If so, then what are they?

6) Do you think it is necessary or important to protect aspects of traditional culture, such as traditional medicine, for future generations? Why or why not? If so, then what do you think can be done?

7) If you had to, how would you describe traditional medicine?

6) If you had to, how would you describe western medicine?

7) What do you think about traditional medicine? What are its benefits? What are its drawbacks? Do you think it is useful?

8) What about western medicine? What are its benefits? What are its drawbacks? Do you think it is useful?

9) What do you think are the similarities and differences between western and traditional medicines? Do you think they can work together?

Interview Number: Date:

Practices

1) Have you ever used western medicines, or gone to see a medical doctor?

(If yes, then...)

1a) When was the last time?

1b) How many times a year would you say you use western medicines or go to a medical doctor?

1c) How far do you usually have to go to see a medical doctor? What is the farthest you have ever had to go?

2) Have you ever used traditional medicines, or gone to see a traditional doctor?

2a) Do you ever put together medicines yourself?

(If yes, then...)

2b) When was the last time you used traditional medicines?

2c) How many times a year would you say you use traditional medicines or go to a traditional doctor?

2d) How far do you usually have to go to see a traditional doctor? What is the farthest you have ever had to go?

3) What sorts of factors affect your decision to use traditional or western medicines?

4) If you use traditional medicine, how do you know who is good to go to?

5) Do you think that traditional medicine should be recognized by the community's health system? Do you think it should be made more accessible through the community's health system?

6) Is there anything else you would like to add, or any other issues you'd like to bring up? Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding this interview or our study?

(Only if the person seems knowledgeable and talkative about these issues)

7) Would you be willing to talk with us again about these things, and tape record the conversation?

Interview Number: Date:

Post-interview Documentation

Researchers Present:

Length of Interview (number of tapes used):

Mileage:

Gifts:

Other Expenses (specify):

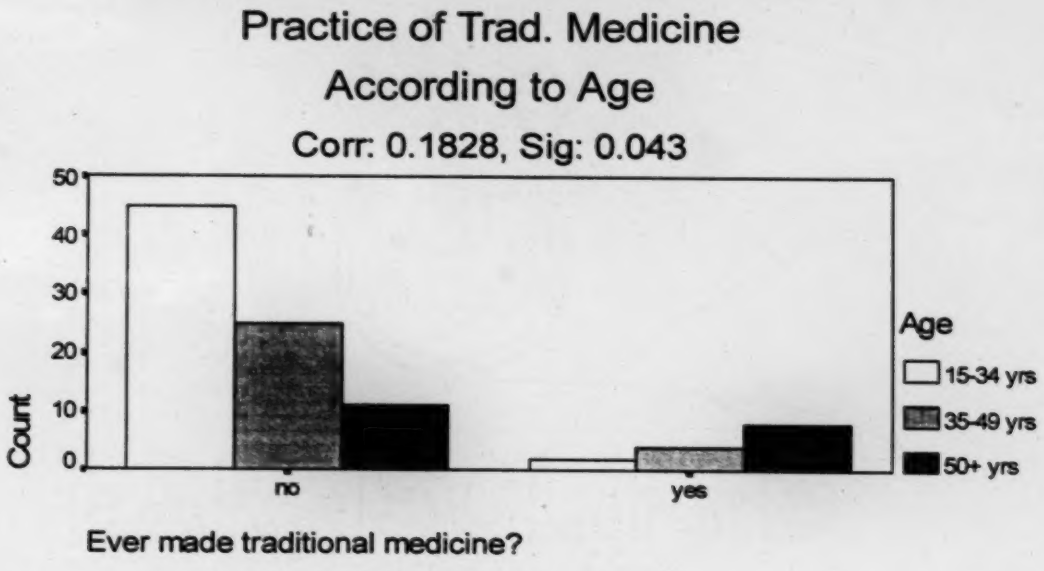
(staple all receipts to the back of this questionnaire)

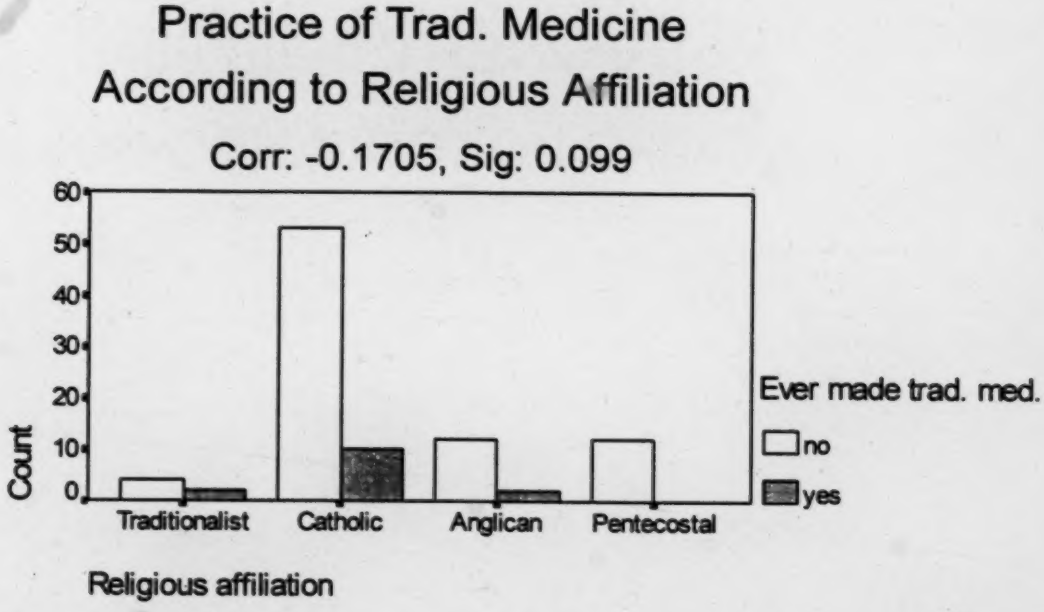
Personal and Interview Dynamics:

Setting/Mood:

Comments/Notes:

The following diagrams are provided as an example of the kind of analysis that questionnaire data made possible. They were both produced using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to compute two-tailed Spearman correlation coefficients. They illustrate the significance of the relationship between both age and religious affiliation in the making of traditional medicines in Wabasca-Desmarais. This reflects both the traditional Cree role of elders in the making of medicines, and the loss of traditional medicinal knowledge and practices amongst younger people, and amongst Pentecostal and less "traditional" religious affiliations.





Appendix 2: Al-Pac Aboriginal Affairs Policy Objectives

Mission Statement: Alberta-Pacific Commits to Aboriginal participation in all aspects of the Company.

Policy Objectives

Community Relations: Al-Pac is committed to promoting, informing, consulting, and monitoring the effects of the Company's business on the Aboriginal communities of the FMA.

Business: Al-Pac is committed to promoting and developing business opportunities with Aboriginal businesses in all aspects of the Company whenever practical.

Employment: Al-Pac is committed to the creation of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in all aspects of the Company.

Training: Al-Pac is committed to training Aboriginal people to ensure they participate and grow with the Company.

Trapping Management: Al-Pac is committed to maintaining an opportunity for Aboriginal people who have been affected by our woodlands activities to continue to pursue a trapping livelihood in the FMA.

Aboriginal Education: Al-Pac is committed to promoting information and knowledge about the process of harvesting timber and manufacturing pulp to Aboriginal people through existing educational institutions.

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge: Al-Pac is committed to aid in researching, collecting and recording Aboriginal Wisdom about the Aboriginal people, plants, insects and animals of the FMA.

Aboriginal Affairs Resource Team: Aboriginal Affairs is a key corporate policy for Al-Pac. Its Aboriginal Affairs Resource Team is committed to successful implementation and integration of Aboriginal participation in all aspects of the Company.

Excerpted from Al-Pac's *Aboriginal Affairs Management Guide* (1996a).

Appendix 3: Permission from Chief and Council

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada / Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

Chronological no. – N° consécutif

File reference no. – N° de référence du dossier
#079-97-98

BAND COUNCIL RESOLUTION
RÉSOLUTION DE CONSEIL DE BANDE

NOTE The words "from our Band Funds" "capital" or "revenue", whichever is the case, must appear in all resolutions requesting expenditures from Band Funds
NOTA Les mots "des fonds de notre bande" "capital" ou "revenu" selon le cas doivent paraître dans toutes les résolutions portant sur des dépenses à même les fonds des bandes

		Cash free balance – Solde disponible
The council of the / Le conseil de BIGSTONE CREE NATION		Capital account / Compte capital $ _____
Date of duly convened meeting / Date de l'assemblée dument convoquée D-J 15 M 08 Y-A 97	Province	Revenue account / Compte revenu $ _____

DO HEREBY RESOLVE:
DÉCIDE, PAR LES PRÉSENTES:

WHEREAS the Chief & Council, at a duly convened regular meeting have reached a unanimous decision.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chief & Council give permission to Craig Candler of the University of Alberta to conduct research with consenting members of the Bigstone Cree Nation in Wabasca/Desmarais. The research to be composed of interviews and questionnaires regarding influences of Cree Traditional knowledge and community attitudes toward Cree Traditional Healing

Quorum FIVE (5)

(Councillor – Conseiller)
(Councillor – Conseiller)
(Councillor – Conseiller)

(Chief – Chef)
(Councillor – Conseiller)
(Councillor – Conseiller)

(Councillor – Conseiller)
(Councillor – Conseiller)
(Councillor – Conseiller)

Appendix 4: University of Alberta Ethics Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY

FACULTY OF ARTS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPLICANT'S NAME: Craig Candler

APPLICANT'S DEPARTMENT: Anthropology

APPLICATION TITLE: Improving Health in Northern Communities

The application noted above was reviewed by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee. The committee was constituted and the decision was rendered as specified in the University of Alberta Policy Related to Ethics in Human Research (September 1, 1990). The committee reviewers for this application are listed below.

This is to certify that the project and/or procedures outlined in the application were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds and to be generally in accord with policy guidelines as laid down by this University for such research involving human participants.

Date: Nov. 5/96

Dr O Beattie, Associate Chair
Human Research Ethics Review Committee
Department of Anthropology

Reviewers for this application:

- / D Bai (Anthropology)
- ✓ D Lubell (Anthropology)
- ✓ A Palmer (Anthropology)
- __ S. Bamforth (Pediatrics)

/ddb

C:\WP51\ADM\Ethics-F

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